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Cover picture: Virginia Woolf by Philip Ross Norman

## In charge of a débâcle

### John Keep

RICHARD ABRAHAM  
*Alexander Kerensky: The first love of the Revolution*  
503pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £20.  
0283994762

Seventy years have passed since Russia's democratic Provisional Government, headed by Alexander Fedorovich Kerensky, was toppled by Lenin's Bolsheviks. From that day to this, Soviet historians and publicists have derided the "Kerensky régime" as the pathetic hiring of native bourgeois and Allied imperialists. Despite recent calls in Moscow for a more truthful approach to the study of the revolutionary era, it is unlikely that anyone will venture a positive reappraisal of Lenin's principal adversary on the eve of "Great October". Kerensky has also come in for censure from monarchists and liberals, and even from some socialists, not to mention spokesmen for the military or the Entente powers. They have condemned him for vacillation and inconsistency, for camouflaging demagogic policies in utopian rhetoric. The term *Kerenshchina* (roughly, "the Kerensky experience") has even entered the political vocabulary to denote a feeble government about to be swept away by a ruthless dictatorship.

Clearly, an element of scapegoating is involved here. How could an individual who was a popular idol in the spring of 1917 become a bogeyman by October? The problem for the historian is to allocate responsibilities between the man and the milieu in which he, his colleagues and his opponents were all obliged to operate. At one end of the spectrum are the out-and-out determinists, at the other those who give most weight to personality or chance factors, while the late E. H. Carr, in *What is History?*, dismissed the entire debate as so much reactionary nostalgia.

Destiny granted Kerensky himself over fifty years of enforced leisure as an émigré in which to re-examine his brief period of eminence. He had no doubt whatever that he was guiltless. In a succession of books, articles and interviews he contended that he had been the victim of a conspiracy "with Lenin and Ludendorff as the twin faces of Lucifer", and a supporting cast that stretched from General Kornilov, the moustache Commander-in-Chief, through Milyukov, the Kadet leader, to Chernov, who headed a left-wing faction in his own Party of

Socialist-Revolutionaries (PSR). These foes had all exploited the gullibility and political immaturity of the simple Russian people, with whose cause he had identified himself.

Kerensky was not always frank or consistent in telling his story, and even well-disposed readers were left feeling that there must be more to be said.

Now Richard Abraham offers an overdue scholarly appreciation of his achievements, a biography that will take its place among several excellent lives of prominent Russians written by Westerners in recent years - one thinks of Martin Malia on Herzen, Richard Pipes on Struve, or Isaac Deutscher on Trotsky. A work that has been twenty years in germination, it is the outgrowth of mature reflection and diligent research in private papers, government archives outside the Soviet Union, and a vast range of printed sources; there are references to publications in Finnish and Czech as well as all major languages. It may not solve all the riddles about Alexander Kerensky, but it is as definitive an assessment as anything we are likely to get. Abraham treats his subject with evident sympathy, but not uncritically. He enlarges our understanding of the man and his predicament, but without thereby invalidating conventional judgments.

Kerensky's approach to public affairs was pre-eminently ethical and emotional; it betrayed a concern for values rather than principles. This was the source of his spell-binding charisma as an orator, first in the Imperial Duma and later before the rebellious soldiery. Theatricality, a love of the grand gesture, went hand in hand with civic courage, infectious enthusiasm and dynamic energy. Yet he was no fanatic, but rather a pragmatic politician whose naïvely optimistic view of man led him to experience setbacks as sheer spiritual torment. He made no secret of his ordeal, exclaiming before a mass audience in August 1917:

Let all the chords of my faith in man die away, let all the flowers of my dreams for man wither and die... I shall stamp on them myself. I shall cast aside the keys of my heart, which loves the people, and think only of the State.

The audience responded appropriately, crying "Don't do it!" He once contemplated public suicide to shock men and women into assuming their responsibilities.

There could be no doubting his devotion to liberty and to Russia - but were these two ideals compatible? Liberty for him meant civil rights and constitutional freedoms, menaced

by extremists on either flank; in later life he leaned neither toward Hitler nor toward Stalin, whom he saw as beasts from the same lair. By Russia he meant the empire in its pre-war limits, except for Poland; the minority peoples were to be self-governing but linked to the Great Russian heartland by federal ties. It was an attitude common among Russian socialists, who underestimated the appeal of nationalism.

Standing as he did in the Populist tradition, Kerensky idealized the *Narod*, the common people, and sought to improve their well-being by political means. Revolution, not Development, was then seen as the key to progress, a lofty credo which led Russian radicals to overlook the mundane facts of economic life. Yet Kerensky was less doctrinaire than most of his fellow intellectuals and took a cavalier attitude towards party-political ties. He wanted to unite the entire left, with himself as arbiter between the warring groups and factions. But to play the part of conciliator he would have needed a more gentle, patient temperament. Kerensky could be charming; but he was also impulsive, vain and conscious of his dignity; in power he cultivated an imperious manner and expected to be obeyed; if crossed, he would quarrel with trusted comrades and they would drift away, thinking him conceited and arrogant. Paradoxically, the art of manipulating others, of persuading them to do as one wished without hurting their self-esteem, was mastered better by the dogmatic, intransigent Lenin than the warm-hearted, accommodating Kerensky.

The two men came from the same social, occupational and regional background. Kerensky's father, headmaster to the young Vladimir Ulyanov, in 1887 recommended him for a gold medal despite the political troubles that beset the family. Both sons cut their political teeth in the Petersburg student movement, but thereafter their paths diverged: Lenin's led to the revolutionary underground and emigration, Kerensky's to the bar, where he joined "the sub-caste of political defenders", advocates who put their clients' interests before the State's. He became a well-known public figure, especially for his role in exposing the Lena goldfields massacre of 1912. Elected to the Duma later that year, he turned his parliamentary immunity to good account, denouncing the manifold sins of Nicholas II's régime; and in 1914, when the Bolshevik deputies went on trial for opposing the "imperialist" war, Kerensky was among those who came forward to plead their cause.

His own views on the war evolved gradually from internationalism towards what later came to be called "revolutionary defensism". Abraham adds new evidence, much of it from Okhrana files, to show that in 1915 Kerensky was active in reconstituting the shattered PSR - an achievement he subsequently preferred to forget. One year later, perhaps sobered by illness, he concluded that revolution should be postponed until after peace had been restored; the immediate task was for all patriots to unite to save the State from an irresponsible court camarilla. He sounded now much like any Kadet.

The Tsar would not hearken to voices of reason from any quarter, and when revolution broke out after all in February 1917, contrary to the Duma's wishes, Kerensky found himself in his natural element. No other established politician responded to the crisis so energetically as he did, saving arrested Tsarist ministers from being lynched by the crowd and organizing popular support for the new Provisional Government, in which he became Minister of Justice. Quite understandably, he was impatient with the Socialist doctrinaires in the Petrograd Soviet, who offered this allegedly "bourgeois" government no more than tepid conditional backing. He realized that all democrats had to stand together if the twin threats of anarchy and counter-revolution were to be ward off. As the only member of both the government and the Soviet, he came to be seen as embodying the national will. It was his finest hour. Yet already there were signs of the disaster to come.

Cabinet solidarity was not a strong point of any of the four shaky coalitions that aspired to rule Russia between March and October. Maurice Paléologue, the French ambassador, reported that Kerensky was "certainly the real head of the Provisional Government"; and in any case he acted as such. He won over its nominal chief, Prince Lvov, and others in an intrigue against the dry, professorial Foreign Minister Milyukov, whose unimaginatively pro-Allied policy was anathema to the Soviet. Within weeks, with help from the street, he had brought him down. A new coalition took over in which the socialists were strongly represented; alas, instead of this consolidating the political centre it weakened it fatally.

Kerensky now swapped his Justice portfolio for that of War - a strange choice, for he had no military experience and could act only as a kind of ministerial cheer-leader, inspiring the sullen troops with the will to fight for freedom. Abraham comments that this "extraordinary trans-

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figuration" had a "great deal of sense to it" at the time, since his ideas on revolutionary self-discipline impressed some senior officers and he exuded more confidence than his predecessor, the ailing Guechov. He that as it may, the Declaration of Soldiers' Rights which Kerensky helped to devise alarmed the traditionalists, and under their pressure he later disavowed it. In any case the soldiers' morale could no longer be restored either by granting paper rights or by launching a military offensive, a step which the War minister rashly endorsed. Motivated as it was primarily by domestic political considerations, the campaign was a resounding failure. The troops fled or mutinied, while in Petrograd anti-war maximalist elements staged an armed demonstration on behalf of "Soviet power". Shortly thereafter the government collapsed.

On July 3, Kerensky, who in April had said that "to apply armed force [against demonstrators] would be to adopt the old road of compulsion, which I consider impossible", wired Lvov: "Demand cessation all further demonstrations and mutinies by armed force . . . Government must immediately publish official communiqué on complete liquidation of mutiny [stating] guilty will suffer ruthless punishment."

However, the strong language was not matched by deeds. Now Prime Minister, a thirty-six-year-old socialist in nominal charge of an empire, Alexander Fedorovich seems to have lost his head.

The failure of the offensive had crippled him, where he had once spoken freely on all aspects of policy, he now seemed incapable of thinking hard about matters outside his own immediate sphere of competence.

Yet he meddled in everything instead of coordinating his associates' measures and rushed hither and thither tackling problems as they arose; major reforms were delayed, ostensibly because they needed the Constituent Assembly's assent, but actually because the ministers could not agree. As the administration crumbled, the social crisis deepened. The towns lacked bread and in some regions peasants set fire to landlords' estates.

Kerensky sought to discredit the Bolsheviks by disclosing their secret links with the Germans. But the effect of this was transitory. Several colleagues urged the use of force: the party's sixth congress was taking place under the nose of a government that had outlawed assemblies dangerous to the State. Kerensky apologized, but finally decided not to invoke these powers.

Yet simultaneously his "inner cabinet" made massive concessions to the right. Conservative officers demanded, and obtained, the reintroduction of the death penalty at the front. The notion affronted the deepest sensibilities of progressive-minded Russians. It seemed to mock the century-long struggle to humanize the military-judicial system. Kerensky equivocated.

## Placing a pioneer

### Charles Townshend

DIANA NORMAN  
*Terrible Beauty: A life of Constance Markievicz 1868-1927*  
320pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £14.95.  
0 340 393257

Has the Countess Markievicz been ignored by history? Worse, perhaps, has she been belittled by male stereotyping? A pioneer organizer of the Irish nationalist youth movement, and of the Irish labour movement, a charismatic leader of the Irish Citizen Army, sentenced to death for her part in the 1916 Rising, she became the first woman to be elected to the British parliament (on the abstentionist ticket, so she never took her seat), and the first woman in any country to be appointed a Minister of Labour (in the Dáil Éireann cabinet of 1919); she is unquestionably a figure to be reckoned with. Diana Norman thinks that the reckoning has gone unfairly against her. Mrs Norman is particularly angered by Sean O'Casey's charge that Markievicz "never reached the rank of failure, for she hadn't the constitution to keep long enough at anything in which, in the end, she could see a success or a failure facing her".

ly expected that such sentences would be rare and that he would quietly commute them. Things did not work out that way - although historians have yet to elucidate the details. The issue became a major bone of contention between Kerensky and the fire-eating Kornilov, whom he rashly appointed Commander-in-Chief only to have second thoughts about his loyalty to the government, just as Kornilov doubted Kerensky's loyalty to Russia. Plans were afoot for a military coup. But was this to be directed only against the Bolsheviks or against the entire left, the government included? And how privy was Kerensky himself to the scheme?

Abraham does his best to clarify these murky issues, but the truth is still elusive, for much of the evidence is anecdotal. In agreeing to place the Petrograd military district under the C-in-C's control, and to station forces near the city (if not actually in it), "Kerensky was taking an awful gamble with the future of Russian democracy". He compounded his error when, in a teletype conversation with Kornilov, he jumped to rash conclusions about the latter's intentions. It was on the basis of this misleading exchange that he sacked the general and assumed dictatorial powers himself. "It is amazing and surely rather disgraceful that matters of supreme importance for millions of Russians should have been decided in a conversation consisting entirely of inference and allusion" - and equally amazing that Kerensky should have sought support from the Soviet and rejected last-minute efforts to patch up the quarrel. Had both men promptly resigned, as Tereshchenko suggested, the situation might still have been saved. Instead Kornilov was openly accused of treachery; his forces

advanced on Petrograd, only to be disarmed by revolutionary railwaymen. The sociologist P. A. Sorokin, who was then on the Prime Minister's staff, found him "alone in a corner . . . bowed with chagrin and disappointment . . . Yesterday a ruler, today a forsaken idol", he sat face to face with ruin and despair. Kerensky now added to his functions that of Commander-in-Chief, but this only made him seem ridiculous, and his "Directorate" was a chimera. Chernov launched a biting press attack on his erstwhile colleague and the PSR disowned him. He could still win oratorical successes but they were pyrrhic victories.

Meanwhile the Bolsheviks gained control of the Petrograd Soviet and almost openly prepared to launch their insurrection. To the last Kerensky remained confident that his government was strong enough to suppress it. "I only wish they would come out, and then I shall put them down", he told Sir George Buchanan, the British ambassador. But this was to discount the utter demoralization to which the army was now reduced. On October 25, as the city fell into the insurgents' hands, Kerensky left the Winter Palace to seek reinforcements from the front, where he encountered a chilly response. Only a few hundred soldiers could be mustered to recover the capital, and the mini-offensive quickly petered out. Kerensky escaping capture by a hair's breadth. This outcome anticipated in microcosm that of the civil war which would rage for the next three years and embrace millions.

So how much responsibility for the débâcle of democratic Russia should be attributed to the unfortunate Alexander Fedorovich? He might be likened to the captain who takes over a derelict vessel heading for the rocks, tacks



Alexander Kerensky with his sons Oleg and Gleb during the family's last pre-war summer holiday. Kalinko, Kazan Province, 1913. The photograph is reproduced from the book reviewed above.

Norman is 'irked', too, by what she sees as the tendency of (male) Irish historians to write Constance out of history - though her only named targets are Robert Kee and F. S. L. Lyons, and her bibliography suggests that the greater part of modern Irish historiography remains a closed book to her.

This is quite a severe handicap in her well-intentioned effort to provide a "life and times" that will not only bring her subject alive, but also show her to have had a significant effect on her times. Norman simply does not know enough to do her subject justice. She provides an easy-going account of the Irish revolution, a little wide-eyed, after the fashion of English people who have just discovered the inequities of English rule in Ireland. Into this the Countess fits at best tangentially. The treatment of the most crucial phase of her career, as Dáil Minister for Labour, contains not merely no new evidence, but virtually no evidence at all of her activities as minister. (Admittedly, she was in prison for many months, and it is hard to do much with these periods except to quote - as others have done before - from her prison letters.) The verdict we are given is based only on the fact that Michael Collins did not openly criticize her department - this was something, no doubt, but is it enough?

desperately to port and starboard, but is finally driven aground by currents far more powerful than his ship; the crew grumble but exhibit no greater aptitude for seamanship. As Abraham remarks in a footnote, Russian intellectuals as a group "suffered from a political culture inhibiting them from taking any political decisions conflicting with their personal ethics, while permitting them to blame the current autocrat when things went wrong". Kerensky was an anomaly, for he simultaneously exemplified their mores and offended against them, just as he did those of "patriarchs" like Milyukov's Kadets or the generals.

As for the uncontrollable currents of popular rage, it took years even for the Bolsheviks to master them, by employing methods that were not open to any self-respecting democrat. It was a cruel paradox for Kerensky that the national consciousness he sought to stimulate among the Russian masses did not develop until after his régime had been superseded by one committed to supranational objectives: men would resist the Germans more energetically in 1918 (to look no further ahead) because they posed a more obvious danger to their revolutionary gains, which they were consolidating with the sanction of the Bolsheviks. The democrats could not have outbid the maximalists in the competition for popular favour, for instance by legalizing land seizures by the peasants, without sacrificing their identity, although they can be censured for neglecting to take other timely measures to restrain the growing violence.

Only the conclusion of a separate peace could have radically improved the situation. But this too was ruled out by the belligerency of both coalitions. Kerensky did stretch out a timid feeler to Czernin, but it got nowhere, since Vienna could no longer act independently of Berlin. As for the Entente powers, they were remarkably insensitive to Russia's plight in 1917. British and French representatives intrigued with right-wing generals and bullied the wretched Provisional Government into continuing the hopeless struggle on the eastern front. In June Buchanan did try to get London to accept Tereshchenko's proposal for an inter-Allied conference to define war aims (in the sense of a negotiated peace "without annexations or indemnities", as the phrase went), but his plea was disregarded. In October Kerensky sent Somerset Maugham - no less - on a secret mission to tell Lloyd George that unless this were done "I don't see how we can go on". But by the time Maugham arrived Lenin was in power. Even if the appeal had arrived in time it would have fallen on deaf ears.

Kerensky, in short, faced an impossible situation, internationally as well as domestically. The determinants are right: in the last resort what mattered most were the hard rocks of objective reality, not the navigational errors of the ship's captain. And yet . . .

As a substitute for hard evidence, we find the technology of the historical novelist: on the Boundary Commission débâcle we hear, for instance (as a complete paragraph) "Had she felt like it, Con would have been justified in saying 'I told you so', but, like the rest of Ireland, she was too distressed to want to." Any attempt to give a coherent account of Markievicz's ideas is inevitably handicapped by the paucity of the theoretical writing, though there is more to it than Norman shows. She lived her ideas; this was what made her so attractive to Seán O'Faoláin, who wrote the first biography of her in the early 1930s. Norman finds O'Faoláin's affection patronizing, and maybe it is. But to counter the "mindless acceptance" of this male stereotype it is necessary to do more than bluster. It is necessary not just to believe, but to prove that Markievicz was not what O'Casey said she was: Norman is unwilling to recognize that O'Casey wrote from the depths of a despair engendered by the near-total collapse of the Irish labour movement after the death of James Connolly; a collapse which he reasonably associated with the inability of any of Connolly's successors (Markievicz most prominent among them) to grasp the power and subtlety of his ideas. Norman cannot see that for some it was a grand

tragedy to have such a nonentity in so prominent a position at so critical a time. Ignorance thus combines with the subject's own limitations to restrict the impact of this attempted rehabilitation. (Oddly, Norman does not know of Edward Norman's notorious characterization of Markievicz on Stephen's Green in 1916; nor does she know that General Maxwell fought against Asquith to have Markievicz executed, as "bloodguilty and dangerous". This she would no doubt like; presumably she would be less happy to read the only surviving account of the court martial by one of its members, which presents a picture radically different from Markievicz's own.) And it must be asked whether rehabilitation is really necessary. Leaving aside the biography by O'Faoláin - though few of us could expect more - there are in fact two good modern studies of Markievicz, by Anne Marreco and Jacqueline Van Voris. The first is vivid and well researched, the second is full of scholarly refinement. When one considers that Arthur Griffith has been the subject of only one biography (now fifty years old), Kevin O'Higgins of one (forty years old), Richard Mulcahy and William Cosgrave of none at all, it is by no means clear that this particular woman has been justly hidden from history.

Many China specialists who disdain "I saw China" books will wish they had written Colin Thubron's *Behind the Wall*, which contains remarkable insights into the country. Sarah Lloyd's *Chinese Characters*, by contrast, is an idiosyncratic, prickly narrative, too singular to arouse envy.

Thubron and Lloyd are both professional travellers: they learn the language of a country before going there; they expect foreigners to be different; they expect to be uncomfortable.

Thubron says: "As for myself, as soon as a place adapts to me, I lose interest in it; it has obliterated itself." Lloyd is severely contemptuous of tourists who "bemoan", "whinge", and grumble "that China isn't like home". Neither of them is, though, completely armour-plated.

Thubron is overwhelmed by Chinese cruelty and although Lloyd claims to be sympathetic to Marxist principles, she is certain that she would dislike living in China on Chinese terms, especially under Marxism, "the steamroller flattening everything to the lowest common denominator of intelligence, initiative, and aesthetic taste".

Thubron, as readers of his earlier books, especially the excellent *Among the Russians* (TLS, June 22, 1984), already know, is a wonderfully perceptive writer. From the ordeal of a journey by local bus in freezing weather through China's far west - a region of Gullags vaster than Siberia - to reach the country's largest lake, Kokor Nor, he gives us a mere six paragraphs, each a masterpiece of description: "The lake was carved in the nakedness like an abstract idea. It might have belonged in the third day of Creation, at that instant before plants or beasts had been willed into life, or man complicated things, or any serpent broke the surface."

In Suzhou, in one of the ancient gardens of exquisite mandarin delicacy now ruined and polluted, Thubron hears a woman describing

## Serious complaints

### Jonathan Mirsky

COLIN THUBRON  
*Behind the Wall: A journey through China*  
307pp. Heinemann. £10.95.  
0 434 77988 1  
SARAH LLOYD  
*Chinese Characters: A journey through China*  
272pp. Collins. £12.95.  
000217793 5

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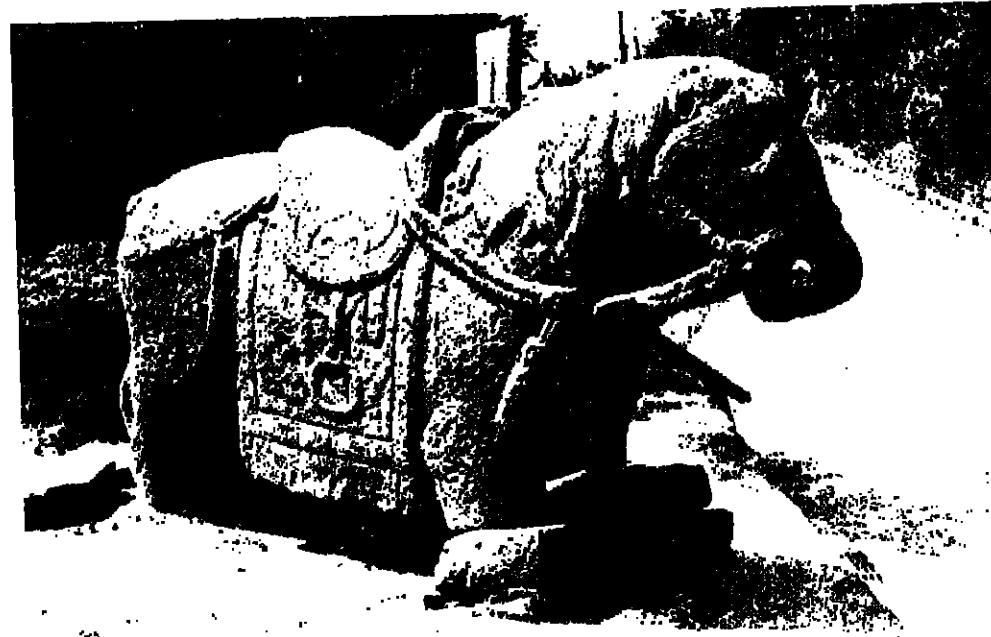
the scene to her blind companion. She tells him of writhing dragons, roaring lions with terrifying eyes, stone mountains. "A few minutes later they had gone, and I was left gazing at a tourist-littered hillside, wishing for the man's dark or the woman's sight." He can also write extremely humorously, as when he describes a visit to one of Peking's public bath-houses, in 1985, during the longer of his two trips to China. Within it there were three increasingly hot tanks, the final one "incandescent" with heat. Old men surrounded him. "They were grinning. One of them suddenly spoke: 'Welcome. We are pleased that you are in our bath.' 'I'm very glad to be in your bath.' . . . In a moment, I felt, a formal committee would be voted in, drinks produced, toasts proclaimed . . ."

But *Behind the Wall* will certainly not please Chinese officialdom, nor will it serve as a guide book for tourists with even the most modest expectations. Thubron slipped into the life of the native traveller; filthy hostels, spit-splattered floors, and food so bad that he became too weak to feel upset by hank Chinese acceptance of dead bodies and regular executions. Earlier, preparing for his journey, Thubron unreasonably remembered prep-school friends chattering about Chinese cruelty. "Have you heard the latest Chinese torture?" they asked each other. And, once in China, not only did he encounter very little gentleness but he found few who were able to explain what feelings Mao and the Party had evoked in them and in the populace in general during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. He refuses to accept this and looks behind the usual Chinese explanation of the period - "madness".

Once authority had sanctioned violence, no monitor inside . . . had called a halt. Such a pattern, I realized, ran back in China's history: a recurring cycle of constraint broken by ungovernable savagery. A student admitted that he had tormented his teachers because it was ordered. "We didn't know - we didn't ask - why this or that man was bad. People hit him, so you hit him. It was simple. It wasn't even personal."

"Was that China", Thubron wonders, "or just him . . . In any case where was that feeling of pity which Mencius said was common to all men?"

*Chinese Characters* will also alarm anyone irrevocably committed to a solo trip in China. Lloyd's attempts to get help for a dangerously ill travelling companion were met with traditional Chinese indifference to suffering strangers as well as with demands for the highest possible fees from an appalling hospital. The only remotely kind doctor, in answer to pro-



A saddled stone horse on a spirit way near Xian. The photograph is taken from Robin Hunbury-Tenison's *A Ride Along the Great Wall* (216pp. Century. £12.95. 0 7126 1727 2).

testations that such treatment was not the way to make a good impression on foreigners, told Lloyd's friend that "they only let you in . . . because they want your money".

Like Lloyd's earlier *An Indian Attachment*, an account of two rugged years spent in a village in the Punjab, *Chinese Characters* is vivid, unsentimental and opinionated. She hates rice. She thinks Chinese men do not have "proper men's shoulders". Above all she hates other travellers' complaints even though she is a pretty good complainer herself. She is a keen observer of the rural scene, although unlike Thubron she doesn't appear to have slept rough in the countryside. She notices how farmers press persimmons, that there is river weed in her boiled water, and that men shave their heads to rid themselves of lice and to economize on haircuts. The peasants would prefer to live in cities, where they are out of the rain and can count on regular wages, and after some time in the countryside, she understands why the Chinese authorities steer tourists away from it.

Behind the picturesque façade of gnarled old peasants and dilapidated houses were lives of poverty, disease, and want. . . . Were they given the chance to express their views on the party and its policies the peasants would be the most condemnatory of all.

Like Thubron, Lloyd avoids the many clichés easily available to travel writers in China. There is little in her book on the bitter pre-Communist past; the famines, child-selling and prostitution. (The Chinese have in fact only recently admitted that their worst ever famine occurred between 1959 and 1961, well after "Liberation".) Much more tellingly, she illustrates the recent past in describing the life of the mother of her friend Xuying, juxtaposing it with Xuying's own story. The old lady, a model of shabby, crop-haired proletarian respectability, had been married off at fifteen to a stranger, her hair coiled and lathered, face whitened and rouged, dressed in satin, prepared for a life of opium and mahjong, "sharing her husband with whores and concubines . . . Men were yang: positive, fiery . . . women were yin: dark, soft, wet, cold, still, negative, and deadly." Her daughter, raised under Maoism, is a university librarian and translator. She lives in a shared room in one corner of a doss-house. Lonely, beautiful but convinced she is ugly because of a birthmark - the party has decreed she is too "unattractive" to teach - she hovers on the verge of affairs with married men. Without ideology, numb to politics, disdainful of labour and of the peasants, "Xuying was a member of the New Chinese, a forerunner of the China to come."

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# The making of Miss Manila

## Victoria Glendinning

CARMEN NAVARRO PEDROSA  
Imelda Marcos  
230pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.  
0 297 797375

The social stratification of the rich in the Philippines makes the British class system look amateur. Carmen Navarro Pedrosa's analysis of "the rise and fall of one of the world's most powerful women" centres on the fact that Imelda Marcos was "socially insignificant" before she became First Lady, and never fully accepted by Manila's "400 prominent families". In contrast, Corazón Aquino's "quiet charm, her intelligence and her simplicity", her "earnestness and sympathy for the poor", are attributed here to her background of old money. Cory's jewels, seldom displayed, are "truly heirlooms", not acquired like Imelda's on gargantuan shopping-binges in the capitals of the West. Cory's assassinated husband Benigno Aquino was a "a symbol of goodness". Yet recent reports from the Philippines suggest that all is not sweetness and light under Mrs Aquino. Political life in the Philippines is too deeply rooted in suppression, conspiracy, corruption and the American connection for this to come as a surprise.

Imelda Marcos's husband was an ambitious small-town despot who fostered the image of his irresistible wife as an aristocratic and cultured woman. This is the image that Navarro Pedrosa is anxious to destroy. She has done it once before, in a book suppressed by Marcos when he imposed martial law in 1972. Her new book updates the story to the fall of the Marcos régime in 1986.

Imelda Romualdez did come from a relatively prominent family: her uncle Norberto Romualdez was a distinguished national leader. But her father was an ineffectual man, employed in the family law firm in Manila. His wife died leaving him with five children; his second marriage was a practical arrangement

with an ignorant convent girl from a humble background. This was Imelda's mother.

A scandal rocked the family firm, and Imelda's father lost his easy income. Her mother, Remedios, did not get on with her step-children, and the children of the second marriage suffered. There was a grim period when Remedios, with her own children, lived in the garage (already occupied by a vast clapped-out motor-car) while father and the children of the first marriage lived in the main house; Remedios's youngest child was conceived in the garage. Imelda claimed to remember nothing about her life at this time, but Navarro Pedrosa traces her manic drive for wealth and power back to "the nine-year-old child in the garage who wished to be part of the family in the Big House".

The big house had to go too, and the whole family moved to a corrugated iron pre-fab in Leyte. To give Imelda her due, in the future following these revelations in Navarro Pedrosa's earlier book, she protested: "What's wrong with being poor?" Imelda grew up after the war into an attractive teenager, entertaining bored GIs with her singing. In 1952, aged twenty-three, she returned to the capital and entered the Miss Manila beauty competition. Since this was the Philippines, it was not a simple contest: votes had to be solicited, and bought with money. Imelda could not raise enough cash, so lost. But she intervened personally with the mayor, persuading him to overturn the decision. She became Miss Manila after all. This was "her first model for political manoeuvring".

Ferdinand Marcos, "a short nouveau-riche congressman" with a trial for murder to live down, married her a couple of years later, and so began the partnership that would "pillage the Philippines for twenty years". After he became president in 1965 the international press saw Imelda as "a cross between Eleanor Roosevelt and Jacqueline Kennedy", and followed her triumphal progress to dazzle and cajole heads of state. She was intoxicated by her own performance, discovering the ease with which she could get to "the wonderful world of international bank loans". World Bank assistance to the Philippines in 1983 was 13.6 billion dollars, precious little of which did anything for the teeming poor for whom it was intended. The Marcos family amassed wealth

through bribe-taking and kickbacks from crony monopolies; through the diversion of government loans and contracts; through the profits from over-priced goods and construction; through unaided government revenue, usually raised from taxes.

Just how many billion dollars they spent and stashed away over the years is uncertain; in any case Navarro Pedrosa's figures are nowhere



A detail of a painting of the "Filipino Royal Family", commissioned by Imelda Marcos, reproduced from Carmen Navarro Pedrosa's biography of Mrs Marcos, reviewed here.

backed up by documentation. This is a journalistic book, aimed at a popular audience; trigger-words such as "Dom Pérignon" and "nemesis" occur so often that they deserve a place in the index.

America's role in Imelda's rise and fall is, however, worth brooding on. The annexation of the Philippines in 1899 marks the beginning of American imperialism. Even after independence was granted in 1946, American influence, linked to American aid, continued. The two largest military bases outside the United States are in the Philippines, and on the Marcoses' visit to Washington with a retinue of 700 after the inauguration of their "personal friend" Ronald Reagan (to whose campaign fund they apparently contributed millions of dollars) the bases were renegotiated at an increased rental. American congressmen aware of Marcos's appalling human rights record protested against the visit, but Reagan is quoted as replying that Marcos was "a respected voice for reason and moderation in international

forums". Like other Filipino politicians, Marcos was a passionate nationalist on the home hustings, gaining political brownie-points for his declarations of independence. But there is evidence that he sought and obtained American approval for his imposition of martial law.

After the overwhelming popular support given to Mrs Aquino, the American administration realized it had backed a pair of losers and advised them to "cut quickly" - no support would be forthcoming. In Imelda's last-ditch appeal to the populace she had robbed, she fought the Miss Manila contest all over again at the age of fifty-seven.

Our opponent does not put on any make-up. She does not have her finger-nails manicured. Filipinos are for beauty. Filipinos who like beauty, love and God are for Marcos.

This was the quality of the woman who fooled the superpowers. She fled with her sick husband, the people swarmed into the palace - and the world heard about the 500 bras, the 2,000 ball-gowns, the 3,000 pairs of shoes.

August would shout, "For God's sake luff or we shall be on those rocks!" - and one of her children went down with polio while accompanying him on a voyage around Cape Wrath. August's particular field for heroism was the polar ice-cap; shortly before their marriage he managed to bury himself for months beneath the snow while manning an Arctic weather station single-handed. He recorded that he never doubted he would be rescued; Mollie, on the other hand, says the episode left her permanently prey to anxieties.

An Auden hero had no place in the 1950s, and not long after the end of his wartime career August Courtland contracted multiple sclerosis. During the long years of his physical and mental decline, Mollie formed a warm friendship with R. A. Butler, who had lost his own wife, and whom she married not long after August's death in 1959. Political heroes are less easy to describe than men of physical courage, and Mollie Butler's panegyric of Rab strives too hard to convince: "He was incapable of an ignoble thought or action. He constantly made me laugh." (She does not explain why or how.) "I am not alone in believing he was a uniquely great human being." Actually, he comes across more like a political engine: contented when pursuing his profession, at a loss when switched off. Used to flicking his eyes down Home or Foreign Office papers, he found it hard to concentrate on novels, and could not understand why Mollie ever found time to read.

Queen, sitting next to him at a theatre performance given for guests of state, was struck by his inability to concentrate on the stage, while he dismissed music as a curious whining sound.

Married to Rab, Mollie found life as demanding as it had been in the August days, though this time the only heroism demanded was the endurance of official receptions. "The wife of a politician is lucky", she assures us, "in that... there is room for her to participate and sometimes help, just by being there and enabling her husband to think aloud." Her book gives the opposite impression; there is no evidence of intimate discussion of State matters, and almost the only moment when she allows her emotions to run high is her attack on "Mr Macmillan" for manoeuvring himself into the principal seat after the resignation of Eden. She treads, of course, the familiar line of Rab as the great Prime Minister who never was, for which one can hardly blame her. But it is hard to imagine that life would have been very different for Lady Butler had she found herself in 10 Downing Street rather than Trinity College, Cambridge, where the Butlers lived in (it seems) massive splendour, supported by chef, butler and housemaid. She writes engagingly, but she seems rarely to have broken out from the restrictions of the political-diplomatic-magisterial lifestyle, so that far too much of the book is merely a record of official engagements, as wearisome to read about as they evidently were to attend.

# Anthropometamorphography

## Roger Cardinal

PONTUS HULTEN (Editor)  
The Arcimboldo Effect  
402pp. Thames and Hudson. Paperback, £32.  
0 500 27471 1

To chance upon a face painted by Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1527-93) is a strange and vivid experience, giving rise to disorientation, vacillation, a disquiet that seeks refuge in amusement. What this book celebrates as "the Arcimboldo Effect" seems a simple enough formula, the synthesis of two genres normally kept apart: the still life and the portrait. The formula produces works like "Winter", in which a decaying, twiggy tree stump sprouting ivy and fleshy fungus is also an old man's face in profile; or "The Librarian", a censorious pedant whose head and torso are constructed out of piles of heavy leather-bound volumes with dangling bookmarks. Such effective double images bear witness to the artist's ingenuity in devising a series of visual puns which promote a fundamental and teasing ambiguity.

In 1936, Alfred H. Barr Jr drew Arcimboldo out of an obscurity that had lasted for over three centuries, featuring his "Summer" (1563) in the New York show *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* as an early milestone on a track running back to Mannerism. *The Arcimboldo Effect*, edited by Pontus Hultén, appears in conjunction with this summer's ambitious exhibition at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, dedicated to Barr and to some degree an elaboration upon his once provocative gesture. Since Barr's time, it has been thought proper to situate Arcimboldo within the tradition of the Fantastic, as a minor master of pictorial illusionism; and taken out of his historical context and juxtaposed with the likes of Dalí and Magritte, he certainly lends himself to the part of the dizzy fantasist, the juggler of rhyming morphologies, the deft conciliator of the naturalistic and the grotesque - attributes all more or less congruent with those of the Surrealists.

On the other hand, as several informative essays herein insist, it would be folly to deny that Arcimboldo was operating within a highly specific historical and cultural context, being for some twenty-five years the official portraitist attached to the Austrian imperial courts at Vienna and later Prague. As Hultén suggests, Arcimboldo's images may have fulfilled a function not unlike those of Bosch in the Madrid collection of Philip II, being at once bizarre, entertaining and allegorically resonant. It is known that Arcimboldo designed eccentric costumes for court festivities - processions, marriages, tournaments and the like - and this might tempt one to see him as a kind of court jester, a mere entertainer. But he was also the entirely serious purchaser for, and curator of, the great Habsburg museum known as the Kunstkammer. Inherited from Ferdinand I by Arcimboldo's main sponsor, Maximilian II, and later developed by Rudolf II, this was a fabulous treasure-store of paintings, sculpture, coins, jewellery and botanical and mineralogical specimens, a momentous compendium of what were termed *artificialia* and *naturalia*. A plausible view of the highly worked paintings which Arcimboldo made expressly for the collection is that they articulate the ideology of purposive collecting. In their authoritative commingling of the man-made and the natural, the anthropomorphic and the elemental (one set of Arcimboldo's faces is devoted to the four elements), they may be seen to constitute an implicit paradigm for the Kunstkammer, if not its symbolic apologia. Further (so argue several contributors to the book), the Arcimboldo Effect derives from the natural philosophy of the late Renaissance, whereby the diversity of Nature is subsumed within a vision of the interconnectedness of all things, the system of universal correspondences. That Arcimboldo may equally have dabbled in a Manneristic way with idle conceits and hieroglyphs should not obscure the likelihood that his works, created to imperial commission, were essentially designed to transmit an allegory of universal harmony which, conveniently, might also carry comforting connotations of political unity within a many-peopled Empire.

*The Arcimboldo Effect* comprises over a dozen new articles as well as extracts from

writers of Arcimboldo's age and of our own, including passages by his contemporaries Gregorio Comanini and Giovanni Fontana, and by recent critics such as Gustav Hocke, André Pieyre de Mandiargues and Roland Barthes. The new pieces are generally stimulating. They include Jean Clair's delightfully whimsical reflections upon certain figures of metamorphic transposition in science and art ("the world is only a vast *Kunstkammer* in constant movement, subject to endless changes before our eyes"); a study by Paolo Fabbri which addresses Arcimboldo as a portraitist; and a free-wheeling piece by Massimo Cacciari which praises Arcimboldo's ability to bind a reckless polyphony of content within a convincing choral oneness of composition.

Despite its unscholarly omission of an inventory of the artist's works, the book gathers up practically all Arcimboldo's extant images (incorporating items in his more orthodox style). Some of the illustrations are carefully linked to the textual argument in the historical sections and include material by such disciples as Heinrich Göding and Josse de Momper - the latter is notable for his variant on the Arcimboldo Effect, the anthropomorphic landscape. The huge range of twentieth-century analogues and affinities is indicated by a

sweep of reproductions of works by Dalí, Magritte, Man Ray, the Dadaists and many others. However, while this plenitude constitutes in itself an argument for seeing the Arcimboldo Effect as a pervasive influence in this century, it is regrettable that there is no actual discussion of the comparative material.

What seems clear is that, while *The Arcimboldo Effect* fails to achieve a unity worthy of the high quality of most of its parts, it has the merit of highlighting many points of discussion in what could be a fascinating debate both on the latter-day impact of Arcimboldo, and on the nature of the originals. Regrettably, there are no detailed analyses of Arcimboldo's actual compositions here, beyond a compelling diagrammatic transcript of "Water" which identifies the sixty-two marine species making up that face. There is surely significant work to be done at this semantic level, as well as at the level of style - what is the precise effect of Arcimboldo's suave painterly finish, the hyperrealist bloom of cherry and apple in "Vertumnus", for instance? And is it true that some people find the images funny, others upsetting? Critics tend to translate Arcimboldo's images into the propositions of a philosopher or a rhetorician, one who has handed down a classic matrix on which others can improvise. Is



"Human Vices Instrument: Agricultura", 1567; an anonymous etching reproduced from the book reviewed here.

it indeed a system? If so, is its meaning that of a virtuoso game (Caillois), a semiotic gesture of simultaneous encipherment and decipherment (Barthes), or a mutant and metamorphic diagram (Fabbri) with implications for the geography of Post-Modernism? The one-time Habsburg Master of Festivities may now find himself getting elected willy-nilly as model-maker and trend-setter at the court of twentieth-century visual poetics.

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## Two kinds of hero

### Humphrey Carpenter

MOLLIE BUTLER  
August and Rab: A memoir  
162pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95.  
0 297 79147 8

One of the photographs in Lady Butler's memoir of her two husbands could almost have come from the film of *Brideshead Revisited*. Taken under the portico of her country home, Spencers, it depicts the young Mollie Butler surrounded by her sons in prep-school shorts, a jolly aunt and uncle, her father in plus-fours with a walking stick, and her mother in sensible tweeds, strolling one of the family dogs. It is a picture which evokes better than any written passage in this book Mollie Butler's classic English upper-class background, and which exudes the sense of security one associates with such origins.

Her narrative, however, tells a different story. Scarcely had she attained her majority when she was married to August Courtland, son of the millionaire; she had known him since the age of twelve and he was "part of the fabric of life". Photographs - again more revealing than the narrative - show him to have been an archetypal 1930s hero-figure, suitable for playing the leading role in Auden's "Journal of an Astronaut" or *The Ascent of F6*. Mollie soon found herself crowding for him in impossible conditions - "a tiny, dark, cramped room, the

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THE ARTS THIS AUTUMN ON CHANNEL 4



# Existing in order to exist

Martin Dodsworth

PETERACKROYD  
Chatterton  
234pp. Hamish Hamilton. £10.95.  
0241 123488

"Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* is about death. It is about plagiarism. It is about the nature of poetry." And, one might add to the publisher's dust-jacket description, it does not sound much fun. Yet, like its predecessor, *Hawksmoor*, it is best thought of as a game played between the author and his reader. "Art is just another game", says George Meredith in this latest fiction – or, to come a little closer to the point, as a game played by words themselves in the field of meaning. Ackroyd is better known as a prize-winning novelist, biographer of T. S. Eliot and chief book-reviewer for *The Times* than as an avant-garde poet in the line of John Ashbery, or as the author of *Notes for a New Culture*, a blast against English empiricism in favour of writers who take their Nietzsche, Sartre and Hartes without too much salt, but he is both these and his reader would do well to remember this.

In the new novel a character describes his own failure as a novelist to capture the given quality of the world in which "everything just exists in order to exist", and no significant pattern can be found. Whenever he tried to write he found himself imitating other people, and this wouldn't do because "none of them seemed to feel how odd it is that life is just the way it is and no other". *Chatterton* is a novel that does affirm that oddity, and does so by means entirely paradoxical. Its unpatterned world is presented in a frame as elaborately patterned as the novelist can make it.

Charles Wychwood, an out-of-work poet, acquires a portrait which he comes to believe to be that of Chatterton, but of a Chatterton who, instead of taking his own life in a London garret at the age of seventeen, survived into his fiftieth year to be painted by "George Stead, 1802." This poses a mystery which Charles solves by travelling to Bristol, the portrait's original home. There he comes by some papers which depict Chatterton's suicide as a fake, the means by which, at the instigation of his book-seller, he could put behind him his unsuccessful career as pasticheur of pseudo-medieval poems attributed to Thomas Rowley, in order to take up another as the forger of poems in the style of recently departed, and so still-profitable, poets like Dyer and Thomson, poems which his bookseller friend will print on his behalf.

The novel piles fake upon fake. Charles has worked for an elderly novelist, Harriet Scope, who stole the plot for her first two novels from a neglected author called Harrison Bentley; Harriet pretends interest in Charles's poems in order to get her hands on the Chatterton manuscripts. Charles, meanwhile, is hired to flesh out – that is, to fake – Harriet's memoirs which she has engaged, without much enthusiasm, to write. Charles's wife Vivien works in a gallery which has just bought the last paintings of Joseph Seymour, whose obituaries have just appeared; unfortunately, the paintings are the work of Seymour's assistant.

There are threads of connection between these layers of fakery. Harriet, for example, is taken by one of Seymour's paintings, most likely one of his assistant's fakes, which reproduces something seen by the young Chatterton the day before his "death". Charles, already suffering the effects of a brain-tumour, has a vision of the young Chatterton, as does George Meredith, in a dream, about the time he poses for Henry Wallis's painting "The Death of Chatterton". Wallis is destined to go off with Meredith's wife, as is Charles's friend Philip with the widowed Vivien at the end of the book (or so it appears). And so on. If you want patterns, *Chatterton* has plenty to offer you.

The question is, in what spirit these patterns are offered the reader. It is not unlike the question proposed by Ackroyd's previous novel, *Hawksmoor*, in which a patently fictitious diabolist, more than two hundred years dead, apparently secures death after death in present-day London. Reviewers compared that book with M. R. James, but James had been asked to write "short stories". If *Hawksmoor* were simply meant to make the flesh crawl, the

reader could have been spared much verbiage. Others represented the book as an account of "modern evil", but here again something seemed wrong; the modern parts of the novel were by far the weaker and the underlying *domineer* of the criminal and his partner seeking each other out too banal to demand such seriousness.

There is none of this banality in *Chatterton*, at least at the level of plot. Something is always happening; the novel accumulates in brief episodes and the reader is kept guessing what will happen next. On the other hand, characters are continually flitting into conversations about what is real and what is unreal, what is a fake and what is not, and these conversations lack bite. Meredith, for example, discusses art with his friend the painter:

I said that the words were real, Henry. I did not say that what they depicted were real. Our dear dead poet created the monk Rowley out of thin air, and yet he has more life in him than any medieval priest who actually existed.

Chatterton's Rowley is not so strongly present in the novel that one wants to contest Meredith's statement, and he is of course a character in a novel so that one should not take it that what he says is offered as a truth. But the whole discourse totters on the verge of saying nothing in a way that is perilous for Ackroyd's enterprise, or ought to be, were it not that saying nothing is precisely what he is after: "everything just exists in order to exist".

It is easy to become impatient with this novel. Ackroyd at times seems intent on goading the reader to the point when the book must definitively be given up, and then sweetly relaxing, offering an unexpected morsel of plot, a new twist to the tale. Charles, for example, gets his portrait of Chatterton from an incongruously Dickensian antique-dealer, Mr Leno, who advertises his shop by a sign: "Leno Antiques. Don't Linger. Make Us Very Happy. Walk Up, Do." This amuses Charles, who likes to address his small son of indeterminate age as "Edward the Impossible", "Edward the Unprepared" or "Edward the Unexpected" as the mood takes him. The reader is under no compulsion to find amusing either Mr Leno's Dickensian manners or Charles's roguish name-calling; if he does not, Ackroyd may lose a reader even before he has had time to present the Firbankian Harriet Scope or Vivien's employer Cumberland, who always refers to his partner as "someone", or Charles's friend Flint, who speaks his own run lingo: "This is the inner sanctum," he said apologetically. "Can I tempt you?" – "Excuse me?" – "Nunc est bibendum?" – "What?" – "A drinkie?"

If this is Ackroyd's idea of being amusing, just what is his game? Something fearfully semiotic by the look of some of the many jokes in which characters find themselves caught up: Charles entering Harriet's house thinks she has been reading *Andromaque* or *Bérénice* because he has misread *RACING* on the cover of her form-book. This is a bad start to a scene in which he replies to Harriet's explanation, "the reason I telephoned . . . is, that I am not myself", by asking "Who are you?" Such misunderstandings do not only foreshadow the impending crisis produced by Charles's brain-tumour, but exemplify that slippage of meaning which is Derrida's subject-matter; Charles's friend Philip has a vision of the Derridean universe in the basement of the library where he works "a world where there was no beginning and no end, no story, no meaning", the very world which, as a novelist, he wants to celebrate.

Ackroyd, too, wants to celebrate it, and in order to do so he must somehow forego the element of story which suggests that there are beginnings and endings. In *Hawksmoor* the very banality of the plot was to make it disposable; in *Chatterton* the object is to make it clear that whatever the plot does it cannot represent events in a real world. The camp stylization of much of the dialogue, the clash of styles within the book, both undermine the status of the plot as an ordered, Aristotelian representation of reality. It is not possible to reconcile all the patterned elements of the novel with each other, or all the details which in a conventional book would confirm the imagined reality of the world presented. The red-haired boy who watches Philip in the library, for example, is the air of being Chatterton mimicking himself once more, but the novel will not confirm such

an identification. In his death Chatterton links hands with Meredith and Charles, according to the novel's penultimate paragraph, but not with Philip.

Perhaps that is because Philip's artistry only exists within the novel in the future tense: he thinks that he is about to become a "real" writer, thanks to Charles's example (though what this is remains appropriately mysterious), but we do not see him become one. Indeed, there is reason to think that he will not do so, since, he thinks, "I might discover a style of my own, after all", a thought which the book with its insistence on the way in which books are made out of books and on the artistry of the faker seems to deny. On the other hand, perhaps it does not, since there is no gainsaying that *Chatterton* is distinctively the creation of its author and "in the style" of both *Hawksmoor* and *Notes for a New Culture*.

Peter Ackroyd's new novel is, then, ingenious and extraordinarily self-sustaining, not to say self-conscious. It presents itself in such a way that it is difficult to pass judgment on it. In a secular world, where everything exists merely in order to exist, existence itself escapes judgment – that is to say, any judgment that may rightly claim a general validity. Nevertheless, only the most committed of Ackroyd's readers will be willing to eschew all judgment on his book. *Chatterton* sustains itself perfectly as an idea; but if art is about feeling as well as ideas, and a reading of other authors, among them Chatterton and Meredith, suggests that it is, then *Chatterton* is vulnerable to criticism. Its stylistic strategy, so brutal in its treatment of the reader, while it may be justified as an idea may not prove tolerable in practice. Its refusal of representation may, if the reader neglects or even rejects the novel's idea, look suspiciously like the nihil for a failure to represent what in a slipshod way could be called reality. The mate-

## Charmed lives

Nicole Irving

PETER BENSON  
The Levels  
172pp. Constable. £9.95.  
009 4676801

"As cool and sharp as a glass of good cider" is the recommendation from John Fowles that Peter Benson's first novel, *The Levels*, boasts on its dust-jacket. It is also apt. There may well be freshness in Benson's subject – boyhood and adolescent love set in the Somerset Levels – but its true source is in the quality of the writing. Both in detail and organization, *The Levels* is economically written with meticulous care. There is humour too, and again this springs more from mischievous juxtapositions and shifts in the narrative than from incidents recalled.

Billy, the narrator, is a basketmaker and the only son of a basketmaker. From an intriguingly indeterminate point in later life he recalls his boyhood and his first love. Delightful though the latter experience was, it cast a shadow on the boy's vision of the world. This simple, unvoiced vision was rooted in the quality of his young life, which he has never given up as false but has found no echo for in the intruding, more modern and less innocent world that first brush with love began to unveil. The Billy who looks back is a solitary man, perhaps a little entrenched. He alludes to the women front "that association or that gull" who come and look at him working, and we are aware that the place has changed, with many of the witty beds that provided the basket-makers' raw material now destroyed.

Boyhood is revealed as a joyful, untrammelled, everyday affair, its high-point consisting of mild mischief with friend Dick in the watery surroundings of the River Ide, then facing the consequences when his brusque, hard-working mother catches up with them – and this usually with the help of gentle collusion of his father, a kindly man given to whimsical enterprises.

In no way easy, but distinctly charmed, Billy's life leads from school to an apprenticeship with his father, and finally to marriage and a summer, need not have upset it. But she and her painter mother, who rents a nearby

rial circumstances of Charles and his wife, like their place in the perpetual exchange of social relations, are utterly unconvincing, and all the more so for Ackroyd's evident success in the "representation", within his fiction, of the imagined past, whether Chatterton's or Meredith's.

This does not cancel out the inventive power of this new book. But it does diminish the extent to which that power weighs with the reader. All about the fiction there lie hints of an uncertainty not kept fully at bay, and never more so than in the last pages. Chatterton's death is imagined with physical details that rebuke the idealized image of Wallis's painting, but the physical death gives way to a vision that represents Chatterton's idea of immortality, an idea which seems to be the book's also. This immortality is the *perpetuum mobile* of meaning that constitutes a literature, and in Chatterton's case it brings him into the company of the artists with whom he will be associated after death: Meredith and Charles Wychwood.

They stand silently beside him. I will live for ever, he tells them. They link hands and bow towards the sun. And, when he is found the next morning, Chatterton is smiling.

At the end of the game, this note of solemnity sounds false. However much Ackroyd's own view of literary immortality differs from that which the book offers, solemnity fits badly with the outrageous taunting of the reader earlier in the novel. It gestures too easily to a conventionality that for most of the way has been repudiated. But then, to take Chatterton as the type of the artist at all has its conventional quality too. Convention entangles even the wisest of the avant-garde. Peter Ackroyd must console himself with the thought that he is, at least, *quite* wary.

cottage, are from London, and beneath Muriel's carefree beauty and confidence are attitudes new to Billy. Their friendship makes its way through the Somerset countryside towards their eventual lovemaking. There is nothing to mar the idyll – except Muriel, for whom Billy slowly glimpses that none of this is new or, worse, special. Unaffected, she returns to London, college and friends.

There is far more in *The Levels* than immediately meets the eye, for it is in every pared down. Muriel's otherness has to be picked up in phrases she favours: "You like?" and Billy's mother's warmth spotted through a well-placed "Thank you, Billy". The reflective framework that gives the novel its depth is similarly woven from an accumulation of detail. There is an undercurrent of celebration here, celebration of a place (and its history), and one which brings sharp reminders of Graham Swift's *Waterland*, although Benson's is more strongly tinged with uncertainty and reserve. There is an alluring touch of aloofness too in the double-edged explanations Benson provides for his reader who, in a terse bracket, is told what a rhine is: "(a drainage ditch)", but who by implication probably hails from the world closer to Muriel's than Billy's. The saving grace, of course, is that Billy's sensitive story and Benson's skill should put some of us on the right track.

Chatto and Windus have recently published fully revised editions of Angela Carter's fifth novel *Love* (120pp. £10.95. 0 7011 3214 0) originally published in 1971, and reviewed in the TLS of June 18 that year and *Fireworks* (120pp. £10.95. 0 7011 3215 9), 1974. Set in a provincial city in the aftermath of the 1960s, *Love* describes the obsessive and extravagant relationships between Annabel, her husband, and his brother. In her new afterword, Carter explains her original intentions, and imagines the future fortunes of her characters: "I've changed a lot since 1969, and so has the world; I'm more benign, the world is far bleaker, and the people in *Love* would now be edging nervously up to the middle age they thought could never happen, they thought the world would end first." The digressions in *Fireworks* were written between 1970 and 1973 and are arranged in chronological order.

## Reversing the flow

D. J. Enright

J.G. BALLARD  
The Day of Creation  
254pp. Gollancz. £10.95.  
0575041528

J. G. Ballard has always been an odd man out in science fiction, but to define his idiosyncrasy isn't easy. It resides in scenes, simultaneously beautiful and sinister, which are hallucinatory in their vividness and peculiar detail, in mysterious and seemingly arbitrary behaviour, and in incidents whose ominousness is tempered by unpredictability. For Ballard, the sight of the world ending, or ended, would induce neither pity nor terror but a sharply registered aesthetic appreciation.

These characteristics were present in Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* (1984), a novel that no

## Nurturing Nell

Shena Mackay

FAY WELDON  
The Hearts and Lives of Men  
328pp. Heinemann. £10.95.  
0434851922  
The Rules of Life  
79pp. Century Hutchinson. £7.95.  
009 1686066

Although Fay Weldon's "modern fairy tale for grown-ups" features the perils and pereginations of a good and beautiful child named Little Nell, and was written in weekly episodes for a magazine, and touches on all sorts of social ills and evils in the course of its complex narrative, it is less Dickensian than reminiscent of a work by a different Victorian virtuoso, Charles Kingsley. Once the author, as Narrator, has been perceived as Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid, Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby, and even Mrs Bedonebyasyoulook, similarities of intent, if not of style, become apparent. Kingsley claims that *The Water Babies*, being a fairy-tale, has no moral whatsoever, moralizes throughout, and concludes it with a blatant moral: "And now, my little man, what should we learn from this parable? We should learn thirty-seven or thirty-nine things . . ." Weldon always wants her readers, or in the case of *The Hearts and Lives of Men*, Reader, to learn at least thirty-nine things, passes judgment on her characters continuously, but sums up her convictions thus: "If there is any such thing as actual immortality, I think it lies herein, that the haves in this world have so much, and the have-nots so little."

Helen, who has "power over the hearts and lives of men", and Clifford are haves, members of the "art-schmartz" world of the Swinging Sixties, but when their daughter Nell is born, a bad fairy hovers over her cradle draped in psychedelic satin: the ugly Angel, who is in love with Clifford and sets out to destroy his marriage. Throughout the story, Angel's machinations set in train many of the misadventures that befall Nell, but, like any witch in a fairy-tale, she is well punished for her misdeeds, as much as for her fleshy nose and grey skin, touched by the sun (she compounds her wickedness by being a South African heiress), and her bad legs, bad dress-sense and lack of bust. Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid turns misogynist as Angel suffers humiliation, a face-lift that goes disastrously wrong, an overdose and a death unannounced by all but her young daughter, so that, as in the case of Mary Fisher in *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, the punishment rather outweighs the crime. Clifford, weak like Bobbo in that novel, gets off relatively lightly (Reader, she marries him: 1100), and while no one herein goes to the length of having herself surgically shortened, Helen and her second husband Simon do both become an inch smaller in the course of their relationship.

Goodness and love triumph; even Angel is accorded a sisterly epitaph, and those who remain are given the chance to live happily ever after – after, that is, Nell has survived a tug-of-war kidnapping and an air-crash, been lost like the prettiest doll in the world, and sold to an elderly Breton couple "whose Satanism" turns their

one would think of as science fiction. They obtrude in visions of crashed planes and dead or dying airmen, but the narrative was conveyed through an eleven-year-old boy, whose partial ignorance and untrammelled imagination accounted aptly for the strangeness around him, the inconsequence of his reactions, and the absence at times of normal motivation.

The behaviour of Doctor Mallory, the narrator of *The Day of Creation*, could be put down to fever, hunger, loss of blood; but this would be cheating. He is obsessed by a dream, and, in dreamlike fashion, the dream turns against itself, reversing its flow, as love may turn into fear or unease yield to tranquillity. Dreams do not abide our question: the symbols they throw up generally lack referents. Even so, the urge to interpret them remains strong.

Mallory is a "renegade physician" drilling for water to irrigate the tobacco projects of a

run-down central African republic, and dreaming of "a third Nile", "a green Sahara that would feed the poor of Chad and the Sudan". A bulldozer, under his direction, tears out an ancient tree-root, and water wells up from an underground stream. From this is born a river, which makes its way through territory controlled by two warring guerrilla bands. Mallory buys a year's lease on the river from one of the war-lords for a thousand dollars and names it after himself. Chapter titles like "The Creation Garden" and "The Naming of New Things", smacking of both science fiction and the Book of Genesis, allude to the Edenic transformation of the landscape, and to Mallory's notion that he and Noon, a mysterious young African girl, are to be the progenitors of a new race. The once arid land abounds in birds and beasts, and

nourished by the river, a vivid new flora had emerged in the past months, a cool realm that extended a hundred yards into the parched savanna. Curious tubers and corns, scarlet drupes, and culinary and medicinal herbs grew in the pale light, and I saw the yellow tubes and flared mouths of fragrant datura, their alkaloids promising dreamy potions on which the river might dream.

This Eden too contains its serpents, and a colourful lot they are. Besides the ambitious, inept guerrilla leaders, there is Professor Sanger, a seedy maker of wild-life documentaries, who arrives with video equipment and five tons of rice for the natives, though they don't eat it, are not starving, and have already fled. (Oxfam and UNICEF have pre-empted the major disaster areas, and so have the powerful television networks.) There is also a white woman whose husband has been killed by soldiers and who was possibly raped by them. She refurbishes a floating brothel named the Diana and, with some native widows, all of them hunters, sets off to found a game reserve perhaps, or perhaps to wreak vengeance on men. Noon is similarly ambiguous: intent either on killing Mallory, or on protecting him, or – an attendant maid who "knows the river like . . . the inside of a dream" – on preserving the Mallory.

She is wordless until she comes on some educational cassettes, from which she learns such expressions as "ploutition" and "soderality". Sanger, with his camera ever at the ready, contends that television makes up new truths, as in his "soap documentaries", remoulding nature into forms that reflect people's real needs; the Doctor's river, he tells him, is a case in point. He survives by offering stardom to all, the chance to appear in every Japanese living-room.

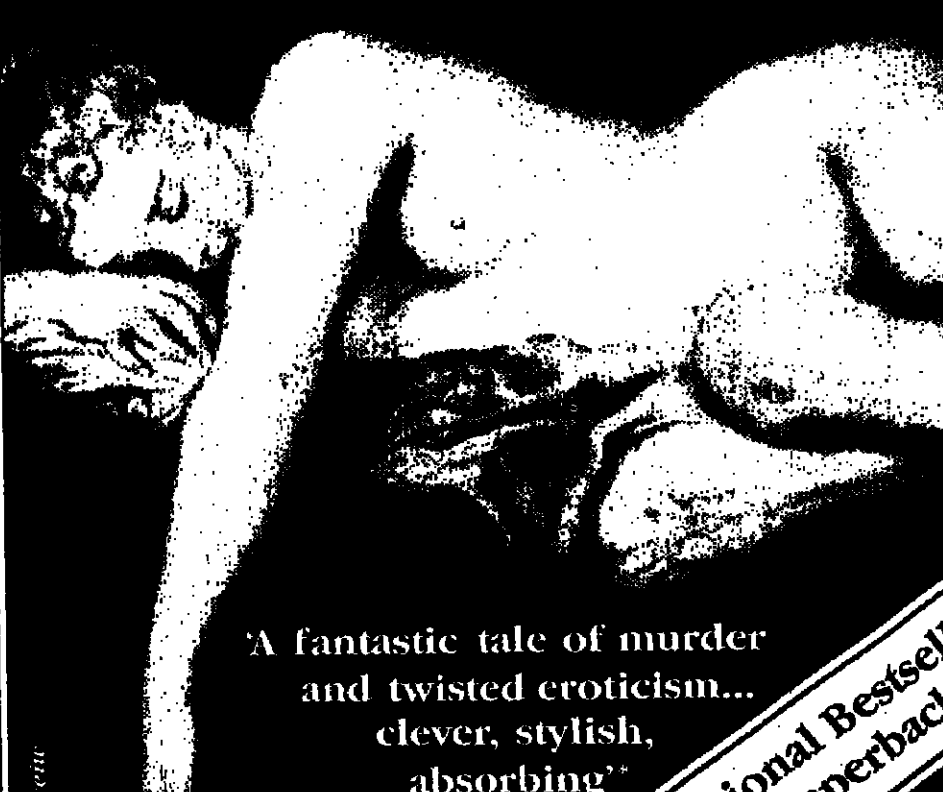
But by now Mallory has turned against his river, and resolves to destroy it, either because he believes it is out to kill him, or because it has killed his dry wells, or because killing it will be an act of surrogate suicide. "Because" is a concept that carries little weight here. The operative word is "dream". With Noon, Mallory forges up-river on an old ferry, the Salammbo, clashing with the hostile factions, and alternating between distanced violence and unceremonious pence. They will find the source of the Mallory, the river will die in Mallory's arms, and its guardian, Noon, "true to our first dream", will disappear. Or "was she a figment born from a fever itself sprung from my imagination?" But dreams don't end. They halt, and they can resume.

Had Conrad been more inclined to fantasy, or less to fact and discipline, this is a novel he might have written. A blend of animated reverie, myth and adventure story, *The Day of Creation* imprints itself on the mind by its acid sweetness. Once the unlovely connotations of "poetic prose" are out of the way, we can describe it as poetic. In its diverse avatars, creating lush life at one stage and elsewhere a fetid swamp of garbage and poisoned birds and fish – there are seeming echoes of Eliot's river-poem, "the drifting wreckage", "the bitter apple and the bite in the apple" – the Mallory is the hero, more so than Doctor Mallory. Readers who can obey Keats's advice to content themselves with half-knowledge and rest in "uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason", will find the novel entrancing.

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# On the highway to perpetual growth

Ernest Gellner

F. A. WRIGLEY  
People, Cities and Wealth  
348pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £29.50.  
0 631 13991 5

*People, Cities and Wealth* is a profound, original and exciting book, in which E. A. Wrigley, a distinguished historical demographer, provides a great mass of information and ideas relevant to the central question of historical sociology—what is the distinctive nature of the modern world, and how did it come about? Demographers are, I suppose, less prone than other people to the illusion that a post-industrial society can in any very serious sense be identical with the society of the same name and language which happened to have preceded it on the same territory. Demographically, the changes are simply too tremendous to be ignored.

Professor Wrigley's first major point concerns the contemporary commentators on the great transformation. The conventional wisdom is that a set of thinkers, stimulated by the various changes they had noted, rethought the human condition and codified its terms. Admittedly, they often did so under the impression that they were analysing man and society as such, rather than recording the principles of a distinctive new order. Hobbes and Locke in politics, Hume and Kant in knowledge, Clausewitz on war, many others in ethics and aesthetics, set down the rules, or one possible set of them, of the new order.

Here Wrigley, concerned with those thinkers who thought about economics and population, takes a different view: what Adam Smith and his successors were doing was not explaining the new dispensation but, on the contrary, proving that it was impossible, that it simply could not happen. Wrigley had claimed something like this earlier about Malthus, whom he described as laying bare the mechanics of a world at the very moment when that world was ceasing to exist. In this book he extends this diagnosis to the other great British economists. We know now that they were wrong and that it did happen, but this does not mean that, given their very persuasive set of premisses, their reasoning was not entirely correct. It is difficult to find fault with their arguments; and this being so, one good way of seeking out the secret of the new world is to find the crucial gap in their premisses. If they proved it would not happen and it did, whatever flaw there was in the premisses may be a good clue to the secret of the new order. This is in effect Wrigley's own strategy.

Industrial or affluent society as we know it is not based on great wealth as such, but on the perpetual and sustained growth of wealth. Its mechanisms of social control and its political legitimacy hinge on this: the legitimacy of government depends no longer on the ancestry of the monarch or on the approval of heaven or on the general will, but simply on the attainment of an acceptable rate of economic growth. But, in the view of Smith, Ricardo and Malthus, no such society was possible. Wrigley sums up their view as being that "Societies might reasonably expect to make progress to a plateau of economic prosperity well in advance of that attained in feudal times, but had no hope of indefinite progress".

Just this, of course, is the difference between the eighteenth-century and the modern conceptions of progress. We see progress as indefinite and continuous, the eighteenth century saw it as the attainment of a definite, but final or finite, improvement. This idea the founding fathers of economics shared with a historian such as Gibbon. The eighteenth century in its complacency might consider itself blessed in comparison with earlier periods, and even on occasion as superior to the ancients; but it did not see itself as part of some perpetual ascension. The economists added an important nuance to the conviction that there was a fixed ceiling to prosperity: they thought they had shown that this must be so. The principle of diminishing returns was bound to set in at some point, where a further injection of capital, or further refinement of the division of labour, would no longer yield adequate returns, and growth would come to a stop. The economists were impelled in this direction par-

ticularly by the importance they attributed to land as the main or only source of raw materials, by the obvious fact that the amount of available land is limited, and also by the belief that the division of labour on the land could be pushed less far than it could in industry.

All this throws interesting light on the relation of Smith and the classical economists to their intellectual offspring, Marx. Marxian optimism has always seemed to me to be the fruit of a bizarre extrapolation, whereby if one fruit of economy was linked to the minimal "night-watchman" State, then an even better one would be linked to no State at all, to an absence of coercion. The spurious harmony of the market would then be superseded by a genuine and unconstrained harmony, beyond all States or markets. But Marx evidently owed not only his long-term optimism but also his pessimism in the medium term to Smith, and more directly. He simply took it over together with the arguments sustaining it, but then attributed it, not to an inescapable and general human condition, but to the specific features of

evidently reached this condition. Low local yields from capital and the near-euthanasia of the rentier forced almost everyone to engage in business, because interest rates were too low to allow all but very few to live off capital. The Dutch weren't rich because they traded abroad, they traded abroad because they were too rich to make much in the way of profit at home. In other words, imperialism is not the last stage of monopoly capitalism, but a much earlier stage of any old capitalism.

Wrigley's main theoretical point lies in this separation of modernization from industrialization, in the special sense he gives those terms. He admits to having considerable difficulty with the definition of modernization, and recognizes that his use of the term is eclectic, and does little more than attach a label to the changes which transformed European society between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. An alternative definition might be to say that modernization is simply the process analysed and commended by Adam Smith, whatever that is, and the process moreover for



An exhibition in 1840 at the recently inaugurated Polytechnic Institute in Regent Street. The two miniature canals held 10,000 gallons of water and had working lockgates and water-wheels. This detail of Scharf's drawing of the Polytechnic's Great Hall is reproduced from George Scharf's London: Sketches and Watercolours of a Changing City, 1820-50 by Peter Jackson (154pp. John Murray. £14.95. 0 7195 43797).

an ultimately transient social order. Wrigley sums this up as follows:  
*Capital is . . . a commentary on the severity of the tensions which were produced by the uneasy marriage of industrialization and modernization . . . His message was clear. The marriage was intolerable and must be dissolved . . . The marriage proved more durable than Marx had expected . . . What had seemed inconceivable to Smith and intolerable to Marx developed into an acceptable commonplace. National product could rise without apparent limit, and be so divided as to assure most men of rising real incomes.*

This passage also highlights Wrigley's crucial distinction, between modernization, which preceded industrialization and here refers to the process analysed by Smith and proved by him to have only a limited and finite potential, and industrialization, which refers to that quite unexpected injection of new resources that refuted the pessimism of the classical economists in its original form (though it was retained by Marx to establish, not the limitations to growth, but the doom of a particular social order).

Wrigley also shows that Smith already contains (though he does not put it in these terms) the Marxist theory of imperialism, normally associated with Hobson and with Lenin. Because of the ceiling on its deployment, a developed country would find its capital unusable at home and be forced to export it; and so commit itself to external trade and foreign investment, notwithstanding the less favourable social and political conditions abroad. There is only a stop from this argument to the perception that the flag would follow trade, and whenever possible ensure an improvement in those conditions, in an attempt to protect the invested capital. In Smith's day, Holland had

which the classical economists' pessimism was demonstrably valid. It is this definition which really fits Wrigley's use of the term. But a less circular and less question-begging definition might be something like this: modernization consists of those aspects of the social transformation of Europe which have basically social roots and can be sociologically explained, on the assumption of a reasonably constant and commonsensically conceived natural environment and a technology corresponding to that conceptualization.

The definition of the second of the two crucial terms, industrialization, would then be this: industrialization is the name of the process which enables a modern society to break out from otherwise inescapable social constraints. This might be called the *deus ex machina* conception of industrialization. Wrigley does not define it in this way, but takes over the conventional use of the term as "a synonym for sustained economic growth". But this really amounts to the same: sustained (perpetual) economic growth is, for reasons conclusively established by Smith and his fellows, impossible, but industrialization is the name of the impossible process we now know to have occurred, in defiance of the considerations and expectations of the classical economists.

What exactly was this *deus ex machina*, or *machina ex deo*, which brought about the miracle? Wrigley's full answer is complex and subtle, not to say elusive; but a first and not altogether misleading approximation to it is simple: coal. What enabled the system to break out was the injection of powerful new forms of energy. The classical pessimism was based on a certain vision of agriculture as the main supplier not merely of foodstuffs, but also of many other necessities; a conception which en-

visaged it basically as the fruitless cooperation of living beings, animal and vegetable, without much aid from the mineral. Human and animal brawn and the growth of plants combined to yield an output, aided by only fairly small inputs of inanimate energy from sources such as watermills and windmills. It was the tapping of seemingly endless sources of dead energy which completely changed the scene, initiated the reign of perpetual growth, refuted Smith's pessimism and made possible the Marxian variant of it.

Here Wrigley's terminology seems to me doubly unfortunate. He writes that "The mutation in the economic landscape . . . involved the substitution of inorganic for organic outputs . . .". The notion of an "inorganic industrial system" is unfortunate first of all because it is a little strange to refer to fossil fuels as "inorganic". Moreover, it also cuts across another well-established sociological terminology: Durkheim's contrast between "mechanical" and "organic" solidarity. It would be awkward for a Durkheimian, persuaded by Wrigley's arguments, to have to say that the most complex forms of organic solidarity were based on the inorganic industrial system.

But the terminological point does not really matter too much. What Wrigley has in mind is clear: the transition from the predominant use of living energy to dead energy. What is also obvious is the central point he wishes to make, which hinges on this substitution: this great change in the nature of the social world was not something inscribed on the agenda of human society, and thus something humanity had the right to expect, but, on the contrary, depended on something external to man and society, something contingent and accidental, namely the presence and availability of coal.

Such a position clearly distinguishes Wrigley from those evolutionist commentators of the great transition, who believed the destiny of mankind to have been ever encapsulated in the human or social essence, only requiring time to reach its fulfilment. But it also distinguishes him from a thinker such as Max Weber, who also believed the coming-into-being of our world to be contingent, but who believed that the contingency was brought about by unusual factors internal to human society. For Wrigley, at least one necessary condition was not merely satisfied contingently, but was also external to the human realm. Moreover, he appears to believe not merely that our actual fate was not inscribed in the destiny of societies, but that quite a different destiny was so inscribed, and correctly read by Adam Smith, Malthus and Ricardo, whose perfectly cogent accounts were only falsified as it were unfairly, by an extraneous intrusion. Smith and Co were like clever readers of a detective thriller, who rightly guess the culprit on the basis of all the available clues, and only find their solution rejected in the last chapter by means of the introduction of new evidence, previously withheld from the reader. No self-respecting thriller-writer would stoop to such a device, though I suppose history can do what she likes.

Some aspects of Wrigley's conclusion I find attractive and some repugnant (which needless to say does not constitute an argument against them). The separation of the process culminating in the eighteenth century from what happened later in the nineteenth and subsequently, in other words the distinction between modernization and industrialization in Wrigley's sense, I find interesting and important. The switch to a production-oriented society, with an increased division of labour and good government, was something which did not depend on the radical technological explosion, which only came later. In fact I am prepared to go further, and say that I suspect it depended on its absence.

No doubt the improvements which took place between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries depended in part on technical innovation, and in part on social factors; but had the technical innovations been really high-powered, would they not have attracted the attention of those elements in society who would have either utilized them to strengthen their own political power, or taken preemptive steps against their disruptive social consequences, or both? The injection of powerful techniques into the Third World tends to produce authoritarian politics, and the injection of technical innovations into the Third World tends to produce authoritarian politics.

What exactly was this *deus ex machina*, or *machina ex deo*, which brought about the miracle? Wrigley's full answer is complex and subtle, not to say elusive; but a first and not altogether misleading approximation to it is simple: coal. What enabled the system to break out was the injection of powerful new forms of energy. The classical pessimism was based on a certain vision of agriculture as the main supplier not merely of foodstuffs, but also of many other necessities; a conception which en-



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Alan Forrest

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**LINDA KELLY**  
*Women of the French Revolution*  
169pp. Hamish Hamilton. £12.95.  
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Daniel Roche tells us that he writes not only as a historian of Paris but also as a fifth-generation Parisian, and the reader will quickly appreciate the sensitivity which he retains for his native city. The appearance in English translation of *Le Peuple de Paris* is, indeed, a significant event for those who study and teach French social history, as it makes available an exciting work of synthesis which is continually asking questions of source materials and drawing attention to the way in which popular history can and should be written. Roche's book – the product of seminars and discussions with a generation of researchers and graduate students – is not only a masterly text on the people of Paris and the development of popular culture; it is also an important source on the methodology of social history, in particular the history of ordinary people who leave few written records for future generations to agonize over.

The book approaches its subject from widely varied angles. Despite Roche's claim that French and English methodologies are very different, his own social history is a broad church in which British practitioners of the art could feel welcome – he presents evidence in tabulated form when this seems appropriate, but his text is equally strewn with the subjective observations of such as Mercier and Rétié de la Bretonne. His principal objective is to understand the daily concerns of the people of

Paris, their values and their anxieties; in his own words, he seeks to explain "the way the popular classes of Paris felt and thought in relation to both the modes of production and social life". To this end he discusses immigration and social advancement, health and consumption patterns, dress and literacy. He is particularly good on the changing use of space, both the external space of the city streets and markets and the internal space within the city's cramped popular housing.

What emerges is a graphic and colourful picture of how ordinary Parisians lived their everyday lives in a world where their own cultural norms prevailed. Roche is not, it should be stressed, concerned with the very poor or the marginal, with those who fell into crime or who became institutionalized in hospitals and poorhouses. This is in the main a book about people who did not get into trouble with the authorities. Of course, as Olwen Hufton has shown, many of them would expect to face at some times in their lives the misery of poverty and vagrancy, or would be forced by need to turn to crime. But that is another question, distinct from the popular culture of the *Cour des Miracles* and the mean streets of the Paris suburbs.

The culture of work and the workplace, which makes a fleeting appearance in Roche's book, is treated at much greater length in Michael SONSCHER's monograph on *The Hatters of Eighteenth-century France*. This is, says the author, not just an account of the problems and disputes which beset journeymen hatters in the last decades of the *ancien régime*, but also "in an oblique way... a contribution to a broader discussion of the relationship between work and politics". Indeed it is – a fascinating account of the effect of technological change on the artisan's traditional culture and a discussion of the place which this culture occupied in relation to the law and the courts. The men at the centre of the study are the journeymen *chapeliers* of Paris, Lyon and Marseille, who had traditionally dominated hat-making in France, but whose dominance was being undermined by the use of hare instead of beaver as the essential raw material in hat-making, a change which effectively threw open the trade to competition from small towns and villages throughout France. As a result, the journeymen became even more deeply entrenched in their customary trade practices, insisting that production be controlled and that no journeyman be allowed to make more than two hats per day, resisting technological in-

novation, and taking their venomous disputes with the masters for adjudication by the courts. By studying the concerns of journeymen within one single trade, SONSCHER throws light on the degree of their resistance to capitalism, on the extent of their differences with the *corporations* – soon, of course, to be abolished by the Revolution – and on the nature of the violence that so frequently erupted between the various workers' *compagnonnages* in the late eighteenth century.

If David V. Erdman's *Commerce des Lumières* may at first glance seem a weightier contribution than SONSCHER's slight volume, appearances can be deceptive. What Erdman offers is a very detailed and at times rather ponderous biography of John Oswald, a British pamphleteer and admirer of the Enlightenment who left his particular corner of Grub Street – in this case Edinburgh – to throw in his lot with the French Revolution. Oswald was quickly drawn into the world of Bonneville and the *Cercle Social*, the world that has recently been illuminated by the work of the American scholar, Gary Kates. Soon he became involved in sectional politics in Paris, and he was to die at the head of a Republican unit in the Vendée. Oswald's is an interesting enough story – and one cannot but be impressed by the number of people in Revolutionary Paris with whom he seemed to have contact. But is he worth a full-scale biography of nearly 350 pages? Erdman, as a professor of English, is particularly good when describing the literary world of the late eighteenth century; but elsewhere he can be discursive and indiscriminate. There is a strange imbalance between the tortuous detail of his hero's every move and the bland historical narrative which serves as background. Nor are the sections of verbatim debate from the Assembly particularly instructive. Two often the motions which involved Oswald concerned the sending of patriotic addresses to sympathizers in the English radical movement, and the debate has much of the passion of the House of Commons discussing amendments to a Water and Sewerage (Scotland) Bill. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Oswald, at least from a French standpoint, was a very marginal actor on the Revolutionary stage.

The place of women in the French Revolution is – as a glance at Linda Kelly's bibliography will confirm – a source of unending interest to succeeding generations. For women the Revolution promised much and delivered little, even removing much of the informal influence which upper-class women had enjoyed at court



J. C. Oudry's "L'Homme entre deux âges et ses deux maîtresses", reproduced from *Les Fables de La Fontaine: Quatre siècles d'illustration* by Alain-Marie Bassy (287pp. Paris: Promodis. 2903181 53 5).

and in the boudoir. The world of clubs and sections was one of uncompromising masculinity. Good *sans-culottes* wanted their supper of an evening. In consequence, the role played by women in the Revolution was necessarily small, especially if, as here, it is seen in terms of a few individuals rather than that of women *en masse*, as pious churchgoers, as still-keepers in the markets, or as participants in political crowds. The women discussed here have little in common, ranging from Théroigne de Méricourt through Madame Tallien to Charlotte Corday.

Kelly presents them episodically, holding her chapters together with an embarrassingly thin historical narrative. It is a world of velvet waistcoats and tinkling conversation, where politics is seen as individual ambition and personal jealousy. There is much weeping and much femininity as the Revolution is presented with all the clichés of a romantic novel. If Thérèse Cabarrus is "the uncrowned Queen of Bordeaux" on page 132, she has become the "acknowledged Queen of the Directoire" by page 144, and – yes, you've guessed – "the uncrowned Queen of Paris" five pages later. It's a great pity, really. A women's history of the Revolution would make fascinating reading, but it must first divest itself of all these frilly frocks.

similar effect in early modernizing Europe, and the movement forward might have been throttled by the very forces it unleashed. So early development may well have depended on the relative feebleness, rather than the power, of innovation. In fact, by the time the new world emerged in full strength, and its implications were properly understood, it was too late to stop it. It had been camouflaged by its gradualness, and that was made possible by the relative non-disruptive nature of its techniques. But in any case, "modernization" in Wrigley's sense of an economically favourable reorganization of society, which cannot on its own lead to perpetual progress, should indeed be distinguished from open-ended growth.

But when the second stage came, was it really dependent on the geological structure of the British Isles? Wrigley's case here is much strengthened by his principal evidence, drawn from a comparison of England with Holland. Why did industrialization not happen in Holland? Here of course the relevant theorist ceases to be Smith, and Wrigley switches from the classical economists to the sociologists who came later. For Smith, there was simply no problem: Holland was a country which had pushed the possibility of economic improvement close to its limit, and was now banging its head against the ceiling, so offering a foretaste of what was to be the fate of England. But for the sociologists writing later, at a time when it was known full well that there was no such ceiling, and that the sky was the limit, Holland is an exceedingly difficult negative case to explain. Why so far, yet no further?

For the sociologists eager to explain industrialization in terms of favourable conditions plus an appropriate ethos, rationality is a crucial element in that ethos: "That Holland had reached a high degree of rationality in economic affairs seems indisputable. Nor was it just an urban phenomenon...," Wrigley writes. It is well known that the Dutch are so rational that reason comes out of their ears. They are even rational in the countryside: no idiosyncrasy of rural life for them. Their society also exemplifies most of the other features which sociologists favour as the preconditions of industrialization. None the less, mysteriously, the industrial revolution failed to take place in Holland: "Rationality in economic life neither led to a take-off, nor plunged the population into misery."

Rationality on its own appears to be insufficient to guarantee either the blissful liberal or the tragic Marxist fate, which the theory promises to early industrializers. Wrigley suggests that Holland was probably more fully modernized than England in the early eighteenth century, and needed the steam-engine more urgently than England did, so as to solve its drainage problem. Holland did indeed adopt the steam-engine eagerly when it became available, but neither invented it itself nor, suggests Wrigley, would have done so on its own.

He does not deny that in a scientific age (a term he does not define) inventions will in the main be forthcoming when needed. But he suggests that "technological innovation in a pre-scientific age is far from automatic."

It would seem that the early industrial revolution (in Wrigley's sense) occurred prior to the scientific age, whenever that is held to have begun. By the scientific age, Wrigley must mean not the mere presence of Newtonian science, but its sustained application to technical problems, and the presence of systematic industrial research. So his thesis could be reformulated, thus: modernization (a high division of labour based only on pre-scientific technology, plus good government) can only take humanity up to a certain point. Scientific technology can take it much further. But: there was a gap lasting quite a few decades, between the attainment of the ceiling of modernization and the elimination of that ceiling by scientific technology. During this gap, economic progress and impetus were, however, kept going by the providential presence of coal in England, and a similarly (?) providential appearance in England of a set of inventions, which linked the coal to productive need. Later on, no doubt, technology ensured the supply of inanimate energy, quite independently of local conditions. But, without these accidents, that gap might well never have been crossed. It is the difference between coal and peat which, industrially speaking, separates English men

from Dutch boys.

It seems to me that by the time the watershed between modernization and industrialization, so crucial for Wrigley, had been reached, the bases of the scientific age and its spin-off technology had been firmly laid. This was so even if the habit of systematically seeking out the required technology on the basis of science had not yet been institutionalized, and even though early technological innovation had been the work of free-lance innovators, not yet linked to the High Tradition of science. If the fortuitous inventions and fuel deposits had not then been available in England, would the gap not have been weathered there as comfortably as according to Wrigley it was in Holland, and would not the growth still have come, albeit a little later?

Wrigley's approach by contrast seems to separate the coming of the scientific age from modernization, and by implication treat it as one further contingency. But was it not far more deeply implicated in the modernization process? Is there not something to be said, after all, for viewing the entire process, of modernization and subsequent industrialization, as one?

The earlier modernization in north-west Europe had something distinctive about its political and intellectual culture that makes it impossible perhaps to treat it as just another case of a commercial and production-oriented society, one which, it so happened, led on to industrialism, thanks to the availability of coal. One could say that the cultural features which made the earlier modernization rather unusual, also made the subsequent scientific transformation rather probable. If all this is so, the conjunction of the two processes which Wrigley wishes to separate becomes rather less accidental than he would have it. All this being said, the analytic separation that he proposes, of economic well-being within the limits of a common-sense technology and the law of diminishing returns, and of a scientifically sustained growth which defies both, is clearly a very stimulating and important idea.

The outlook and range of ideas which lead Wrigley to this position have both their strengths and weaknesses. The book displays an extraordinary and enviable mastery of the social, economic and demographic history of western Europe. Its deployment of the comparative method, in disentangling both regional idiosyncrasies and shared influences, is masterly. Over and above the rich and detailed source material, Wrigley has thoroughly internalized the ideas of Smith, Malthus and Ricardo, and he is extremely perceptive about Marx. It is the ideas and the critique of these masters which give his material its unity and interest. Its focusing of the comparative method, not on other pre-industrial civilizations, but on the England/Holland contrast, adds to the book's originality.

But there is also a price to be paid for this rather North-Sea-centred vantage-point. If Wrigley's remarks about Marx are perceptive and convincing, his comments on Weber are somewhat perfunctory, and other sociologists are largely absent. (Freud is twice mentioned as a commentator on the great historical transformation, though it is not made clear which of his ideas are meant to be relevant, and how.) Comte and Durkheim are absent from the index, and so are writers such as Joseph Needham or Mark Elvin, who can throw light on the availability and role of technical innovation in China. Given the importance, for Wrigley's argument, of the question whether innovations are the slaves of social needs or autonomous, this is a strange omission. (The autonomist view is central for Wrigley's argument.)

His most important question is, quite properly, a very ambitious one. Both the question, and the method employed in answering it, are summarized in the following passage:

It is not what was common to all modernizing countries, but what was peculiar to England which then appears important. And what is explained is not simply why the industrial revolution occurred in England earlier than elsewhere, but why it occurred at all. [Emphasis added.]

Many of us will persist in thinking that what the modernizing countries shared is, in the end, more important than coal and James Watt: it is the difference between coal and peat which, industrially speaking, separates English men

harbour an irrational aversion to considering the world we live in, whose nature is our main preoccupation, to be the fruit of a mere accident.

The suspicion may attach to Wrigley, as it does to his hero Smith, that in the last analysis, and all qualifications contained in this book notwithstanding, he takes the cultural and political idiosyncrasies of north-west Europe too much for granted. Hence he underestimates their continuous relevance throughout the two processes which he would separate. He rightly quotes Smith's observation that the most important effect of commerce and manufacture is that they "gradually introduced order and good government, and with them the liberty and security of individuals, among the inhabitants of the country, who had before lived in a continual state of war with their neighbours and of servile dependency upon their superiors". Smith was right about the crucial importance of this link, but egregiously wrong about the mechanics by which the change was brought about.

In a passage actually quoted by Wrigley, he suggests that it was the vanity of the lords which allowed them to be seduced into switching their conspicuous display from retainers to haubles, thereby transforming a personal

## Glances at the show

Lauro Martinez

**PETER BURKE**  
*The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on perception and communication*  
281pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.  
0521320410

In sixteen cursory essays Peter Burke offers us "the historical anthropology" of Italy between about 1500 and 1800. He aims to provide a panorama of "Scenes from the Drama of Everyday Life", his alternative title for the book, suggested in the first essay. The organizing topics range from ritual and insult to carnival and sainthood, each getting an essay with a good deal of caveat about theory.

His opening essay contends that early modern Italy was not a "sincerity culture" but rather an "honour" or "theatre culture", a "land of façades" where face-saving was all-important. The burden of the second essay is to claim that historical reconstructions should distinguish between the views of natives and those of outside observers. There follow four essays on "modes of perception", where we learn that census-takers perceived people according to the reigning social stereotypes and that bishops, on their diocesan rounds, were blinkered by prejudicial values. "How to be a Counter-Reformation saint" is the heading to one chapter because saints are held to reflect the values of the age in which they were canonized. They are given a foil in the succeeding chapter, "Perceiving a counter-culture", which looks at the expanding underworld of beggars, thieves and vagabonds.

"Modes of communication" is the heading for the next nine essays. The first, "Languages and anti-languages", aspires in fifteen pages to be "a retrospective ethnography" of the peninsula's "oral culture". Essay eight seeks to outline the "ethnography" or "sociology" of the whole "system of insult and blasphemy" in Italy. Nine tells us that "The uses of literacy" pertained to the concerns of business, family, Church and State. "Conspicuous consumption in seventeenth-century Italy" is an account of the "communicating" of status and social identity by means of buildings, coaches and dress. And "The presentation of self in the Renaissance portrait" glances at portraits from the standpoint of sitters: "as social types" – "portraits being 'a theatre of status'".

Burke's representations are not as hurried as this digest, but their movement is so glancing that little or nothing goes to analysis. Highlighting some of the "rituals of the early modern period", the twelfth essay reaches the surprising conclusion that ritual served to enhance the "majesty" of popes. We pass on to "The carnival of Venice", to be told that this was a season of "deceit" and "disguised aggression", though it became over more com-

nexus leading to dependency, into the impersonal, anonymous and politically anodyne nexus of the market, which engenders no submission. So, it would seem, it was their vulgarism which emasculated them politically. They certainly were no such fools. If they made the switch, they did so because a moral and political climate prevailed in which liquid wealth was a far better lever of power than the old, highly illiquid investment in retainers, and where indeed the latter could no longer be used to much effect, or at all. Economic sense, and not the most childish vanity, eventually led to the clearances, which Smith did not foresee. Whether the factors making for this political climate were also linked to those which eventually made perpetual unrestrained growth possible, is another question. Such a link would have to be firmly established if Wrigley's disjunction of modernization and industrialization were to be repudiated altogether.

Specialists will use this volume for its extensive treatment of demographic, urban and social history. I have not discussed these details, and would not be competent to do so. But all non-specialists concerned with the central question of the emergence and nature of the modern world will derive great stimulus and illumination from its general ideas.

mercial in the course of time. Essay fourteen, a consideration of the famous revolt of Masaniello (Naples, 1647), maintains that the ritual of this event was a quest for organizational coherence and for the legitimizing of grievances by means of "theatre". "Rituals of healing" reviews the activity of popular healers, including priests, wise women and charlatans. And the concluding essay, treating Europe generally, takes on the task of accounting for "The repudiation of ritual", but does so chiefly by citing Protestant attacks on the efficacy of Catholic ritual and by invoking the argument from "reaction" – the eighteenth century's alleged reaction against the elaboration of ritual in the preceding 200 years.

Burke has, in effect, served up the old chestnut about Italy's being a *bella figura* culture and decked it out with bits of theory. In essay after essay, he metaphorizes Italian social life as theatre so as to jam events and people into stereotypes. With a facility for generalizing which turns into a process of ethnographic homogenization, he smooths out the characteristics that differentiated Venice, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Rome and Naples. Broaching one of the richest and most important fields, the essay on episcopal visitations races over more than four centuries (1437-1865) in a mere eight pages. The chapter "Insult and blasphemy" is rendered without a single instance of sustained linguistic analysis. No picture mentioned in the discussion of the Renaissance portrait is given more than two or three lines of direct commentary. The pivotal essay on "languages" boils down to a "sketch-map" of regional dialects, with a flashing of the sociolinguistic notions of "register" and "anti-language". And the evidence adduced, be it on documentary sources, bishops, languages, literacy, or the rest, is wholly insufficient.

For all its fashionable terminology, Burke's book is an old curiosity shop. He flits from item to item and century to century, retelling gossip and anecdote, and passing this off as "ethnography", a descriptive mode which ought surely to be denser, more concerted and more empirical. Nor is there any help to be gleaned from his pronouncements about theory, no adequate substitute for a tenacious investigation of historical sources. If what we desire is an anthropological history of Italy, we might do better to begin with the study of neighbourhoods, patronage and kinship groups, daily cash expenditures, and the vernaculars that went with all this. To take the first of these: In the cities that most interest Peter Burke, neighbourhoods were by and large the urban and mental space for social identities, kinship, occupation, worship and the give-and-take of every day. The crushing force of certain insults came from their notoriety in a neighbourhood. But let us always bear regional differences in mind: that was one thing in Naples and something else again in Florence.

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## Bawd and lodging

David Coward

ERICA-MARIE BENABOU  
*La Prostitution et la police des mœurs au 18e siècle*  
547pp. Paris: Perrin. 150fr.  
22620434 X

In Enlightenment France, prostitution was the liveliest growth industry in a stagnant economy. One Parisienne in seven was a whore, a figure which presupposes the existence of a solid infrastructure of madams, procurers, touts, landlords, hotel-keepers, restaurateurs, dressmakers and jewellers. "La galanterie", once admired as the summit of French urbanity, had acquired a new meaning: it was, along with the equally revealing "rhume ecclésiastique", a synonym for venereal disease. The lead given by the King was scarcely calculated to raise the moral tone. Royal mistresses and their offspring were so numerous, it was said, that Louis XV was truly "le bien aimé" and more often than not the father of his subjects. Nobles like Conti and Richelieu no longer made chivalrous conquests but bought love from wholesalers like Mme Gourdan - of a lady's favours only the last had any value.

For the ambitious bourgeois, the ideal of "vivre noblement" included keeping a mistress or two, and to meet the demand, pimps and bawds bought and sold children, propositioned servants, and put shop-girls into the beds of men who could afford 100 louis for a *passé* or 200 to 300 livres a month (payable in advance) for a more settled arrangement. At *travail* level, women could be had for a few sous or a pint of wine. Children born of such encounters were regularly abandoned to the appalling Foundling Hospital, which solved a social problem by acting as an effective infanticide agency. Whores who made trouble (along with those who did not) were arbitrarily rounded up and removed from circulation for three months. The diseased among them, if they could be made to pay, were subjected to mercury frictions which cured one in two, killed one in ten, and caused the teeth and hair of all concerned to fall out. If, as Chamfort remarked, "Le grand monde est un mauvais lieu que l'on avoue", the "petit monde" was clearly unspeakable.

The late Erica-Marie Benabou's doctoral thesis - here reduced to very readable proportions by Pierre Goubert - is a measured, richly documented and quite chilling presentation of the Paris flesh-market, which met with increasing public hostility as the century advanced. The Church denounced whores and whoring. Physiocratic economists warned of the consequences of under-population. Medical men predicted a weakening of the breed. Moralists spoke of the threat to marriage and the family and argued that the vast sums swallowed by Venus (which the pro-luxury lobby defended as an efficient means of redistributing wealth) led to a degree of public ostentation which would turn the heads of poor working girls and

eventually anger the populace.

After 1750, renewed complaints of outrages to public decency and the spread of venereal disease gave rise to demands that prostitution should be outlawed or at least regulated. The abolitionists had law on their side but were outnumbered by the regulationists, who took the pragmatic view that society should control what it could not prevent: Restif's "necessary evil" thesis receives a good hearing here, though the influence of *Le Pornographe* is somewhat overplayed. The regulationist case has a surprisingly modern ring but was frequently couched in terms which did not impress the police. In addition to their view that it was unthinkable that a modern State should ever give official sanction to so shameful a trade, successive law officers held that any form of overt toleration would encourage citizens to believe that whores and brothels were respectable and safe, and thereby actively promote the spread of vice and disease. However, the police intervened only with extreme reluctance to curb homosexuality which, though a capital crime, was regarded as an aristocratic vice best left unpunished: Denuhou records only one instance of punishment by death, though there were at least three - the last in 1783.

Laws and ordinances prohibiting prostitution dated back to the Middle Ages. Though they were periodically renewed, enforcement of them was as slack as police surveillance was discreet. All *Lieutenants de Police* from D'Argenson (1697-1718) onward, kept a check on prostitutes and their clients but took action only when public order was disturbed or the "interest of families" was involved. Paternalism was preferred to active repression, which would merely drive vice underground and make it harder to contain. However, a separate vice squad was created in 1747 to gather information and monitor developments. As the situation deteriorated and public outcries grew stronger, the police were forced to adopt a higher profile. Lenoir's ruling of 1778 was aimed against the clandestine trade and in effect unofficially licensed the *maison de passe*, establishing a principle of limited toleration which remained at the heart of French legislation in this area until 1946. With a total force of 1,500 men, Lenoir was unable to make his policy work, and the *ancien régime* arrived at 1789 without solving a problem which was neglected by nearly all Revolutionary governments.

Benabou's wide reading and archival gleanings are impressive, though quibbling critics might have liked more Mercier and less Restif: an indication of the wider European experience (both Maria Theresa and Joseph II gave up attempts at abolition); and a little more about developments in provincial France (for example, the Bordeaux ruling of 1786). But *La Prostitution et la police des mœurs au 18e siècle* is an authoritative study of a subject whose eternal fascination was explained by D'Alembert as yet another illustration of the unavoidable laws of attraction and repulsion.

## The family way

Eugen Weber

ANDRÉ BURGUIÈRE, et al (Editors)  
*Histoire de la famille*  
Tome 1: Mondes lointains, mondes anciens  
639pp. 380fr. 2200 371063.  
Tome 2: Le choc des modernités  
559pp. 350fr. 2200 371047.  
Paris: Colin  
MARTINE SEGALAN  
*Historical Anthropology of the Family*  
Translated by J. C. Whitehouse and Sarah Matthews  
328pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£27.50 (paperback, £9.95).  
0521 257042

Sociologists and anthropologists have [re?]discovered History. It is hard to tell what Sellar and Yeatman would make of that, but this reviewer plumps for its being a good thing. Or, at least, a good start. Family history is upon us: copious and discursive in the two volumes put together by André Burguière, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, Martine Segalan and Françoise Zonabend; compact and compendious in Segalan's book, which has been ably translated by J. C. Whitehouse and Sarah Matthews.

*Histoire de la famille* is massive, handsomely illustrated, and copiously equipped with graphs, charts and other social science paraphernalia. Brief prefaces provide the elegant imprimatur of distinguished scholars. And the stately binding cracks when handled. Volume One (*Mondes lointains, mondes anciens*) runs from "primitive" societies, for which quotation marks are nowadays *de rigueur*, through the ancient world, to the end of the Middle Ages; Volume Two (*Le choc des modernités*) from the birth of modern times to the present.

Such pithy fare permits no swift description. There is no single family organization, no typical marriage either; the way family and marriage currently work in the West is merely one of many possible ways provided by a wide range of cultures. In African societies, for example, dead men can be presumed to marry; women can rent their wombs to others or "marry" other women who can bear children on their behalf. Ancient Greeks could bequeath a wife to a designated heir; ancient Romans could lend their wives to produce an heir for an ally or a friend. Marriage, evidently, is not about affection, not about sexual satisfaction, not even about bringing up children, but about society: the division of functions within it, the exchange of services between men and women, and between the groups from which these come.

Both volumes of the *Histoire de la famille* allot about one-third of their space to non-Western societies - Asian, African and, in Volume Two, American. Typically (and appropriately) the chapter on Latin America is entitled "Children of the Apocalypse", that on North America "Love and Liberty".

Ancient societies turn out to be just as exotic

as faraway ones, and yet familiar too. Among Romans marriage is for property owners, eroticism is reserved for courtesans, dignified repression for the spouse. The woman is a womb (nineteenth-century French doctors thought so too). Tacitus, married at twenty-four to a thirteen-year-old girl, found the engagement of seven-year-old Octavia to twelve-year-old Nero perfectly reasonable, the more so since the young people waited two years before they went to bed. Not surprisingly, lots of little girls died in childbirth, to be replaced by more mature females who had been properly run in. Then, as later, serial marriage was standard experience, and so was being orphaned or being shunted around from old household to new (the wicked stepmother seems to have been an Egyptian invention).

Disappointingly, the only chapter devoted to French families as such focuses on their evolution during the last quarter-century or so, with little opportunity to illustrate the continuities and discontinuities that mark this busy period and the decades that preceded it - a time when, once and for all, the family changed from a unit of production to a unit of consumption.

Segalan makes up for this lack. Her *Historical Anthropology*, which is also a historical sociology of marriage and childhood, especially in recent times, provides the economy version of the luxury safari of the collective tomes. Sensible and straightforward, Segalan discusses the make-up of family, marriage and parenting, the roles and activities of spouses, the structural relations between family, domestic group and kin, and the relations between these and society. There are good pages on contemporary divorce, which does not create really new situations but re-creates past instabilities, once endured, now chosen: re-marriage and children by several spouses. There are good things too on the status of women, on legislation affecting women and the family, on women working (more autonomy, but traditional roles persist). Also on new rituals - some related to longevity (Gold and Diamond weddings); others to secularization, like the shift of celebrations from patron saint's day to birthday; others to commerce, like Mother's Day, invented in America early in the twentieth century, taken up with enthusiasm by the Nazis, adopted by Vichy France, hence dropped after 1945 for its embarrassing associations and only recently re-adopted.

All this is very well, but some of the basic questions never get asked. Why is it the case that, as Segalan points out, "French marriage sociologists do not very often mention love"? Why was it a Frenchman who wrote "Famille je vous hais" and why are uncivil family wars such a staple of French literature? Could there be more to family relations, to marital relations, than structures? I am not at all sure that all happy families resemble one another, but societies with so many unhappy families may have something in common. A national character? Fiel! At least, a theme for historical anthropology.

### Waiting for the storm: Barbès

It's the sweeper with the torpid broom  
wading through swamp-air, mopping his nape;  
the mounds of crayfish waving feelers,  
clawing space, and craving sea.

The dogs announce it, and the tingling comb.  
It's the rumble in the oubliettes,  
the beaded cleavage advertising  
fan-cooled booths, for quick relief.

It oozes out from a bed of glair,  
till crooked fissures open in the cloud -  
a jagged hand, on airmail blue.  
It's the swelling up that blurs the page,

and the deluge wipes it clean -  
the window slamming suddenly inward,  
and the sound of running heels,  
like a burst of automatic fire.

## Remainders

Eric Korn

Obviously nobody ever learns from experience, because nobody ever approaches an experience (whether from in front or from behind) without knowing it all already: you wouldn't even recognize it as Experience if you didn't have an ideological uniform for it to wear. By the same token, whenever you see an editorial on The Lessons of this that or the other, you may be sure that the editorialist is doing the teaching, not the learning.

So when a man ran amok in Berkshire and murdered a large number of people with a semi-automatic weapon, the natural sense that this shouldn't happen was immediately swamped by the cries of those who had just been waiting for this to happen, as it precisely confirmed their view of the world. Nobody said that every now and then, in the best and the worst regulated polities, someone goes crazy, musth, berserk or loco, grabs the nearest weapon (yataghan, kris, jawbone of ass, napalm), and goes on killing till stopped. They do this because they have been driven mad by the bio-graph, by cheap printed fiction and universal literacy; they do this because they have been driven mad by excessive prayer, by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, by tight-fitting undergarments or too much gamma-aminobutyric acid in their diet; they do this, finally, because human beings are not very nice, or to put it more cheerfully, because *Homo sapiens* though a highly efficient machine, still has a few bugs in its program.

Too many people, obviously, are killed by unofficial maniacs; but fewer than by badly serviced automobiles or tainted cooking oil; far fewer than by official maniacs whom we revere. Nobody wants to look into his or her own heart and see murder there; but everyone has a list of things they want stopped. The more logical would like to stop members of the public totting machine-guns (this leaves them in the

hands of the military and civil authorities, who have frequently demonstrated their maturity and responsibility); the rest want to stop literature or sex. One man, concerned that arms control shouldn't stop the right sort of chaps from having guns, suggested that the important thing was to stop the supply of bullets, which would be held by the police and issued as needed. "Please sergeant I want to shoot thirty-two clay pigeons, thirteen and a half brace of snipe for the pot, two badgers that have been worrying my stoats, a spavined horse and a demonstrator, and I miss one time in three, so I need seven dozen .300 and I'd better have one box armour piercing." "Certainly Sir will that be all?"

Christopher Priest, the author of *A Dream of Wessex*, whom I greatly admire, wants W. H. Smith to stop selling magazines like *International Journal for the Study of Arms Technology*, *Loaded Magazine*, *Which Bayonet?*, *Magnum Man*, *Fully Cocked*, *Lead in Your Pencil* and *Perfectly Respectable Magazine for Entirely Adequate chaps who are interested in ballistic technology and need for academic purposes to see photographs of the effects of high velocity projectiles on (mostly non-European) flesh*. W. H. Smith refuses to ban gun magazines on the grounds that this would be censorship; their record in defence of free speech is second to none. Priest describes the magazines as "pornographic in the pure sense of the word... written to arouse response and encourage participation". Priest is, presumably, not really against arousing response and encouraging participation, a perfectly respectable purpose for such literary modes as gastronomy, ghost stories, patriotic verse and pornography in the pure sense of the word.

David Holbrook says that it is certainly down to Rambo; he says that if one looks at the phenomenological evidence there can be no doubt where to look for the origins of the "immense new changes in our society for the worse"; but he is just as sure that vested in-

terests will prevent any discussion of the subject.

Some people wanted to profit more directly. They crawled around the streets of Hungerford looking for spent cartridges as souvenirs. The Prime Minister visited the injured, the political equivalent of gathering spent cartridge cases: "sorrowful Maggie, who herself witnessed the Hungerford Horror, will bring in new laws to curb TV sex" is how one newsorgan described it.

\* \* \*

Do you get excited by numismatics? Some do.

These few coins lie a mute witness to the awesome struggles that tore our lands asunder twenty centuries past... maybe they were a reserve, put aside by an heroic hand... determined to effect a last desperate effort to free their beloved soil from the awesome yoke looming behind the might of the Roman eagle... they never returned, and their tragic investment for a future dawn that was not to be, remained mouldering under the Grouville soil for sixty generations until a former painstakingly rolled aside huge rocks, and they were once again warmed by the rays of the sun.

This comes from a pleasant archaeological-museumist at the site of La Hogue Bie, a neolithic passage-grave supported in the middle by a Corinthian column, believed to be of later workmanship, near the centre of the isle of Jersey, where I just spent a weekend (Grouville, thanks). Caligula's furs, a diminishing crew, will recognize an archaeologist for "boot" unknown to *OED*: *Jersey under the Roman caligae*, or *Jacobus-boot*, a memento for visitors: why the French come to Jersey to see Museums of the Occupation is a mystery, but I guess they are after Bergerac mementoes and tomatoes.

\* \* \*

"I was told you might be interested in this", he said and I had to put a chair on my right foot to stop my paranoid lifting into the stratosphere, for "this" was Faustino Chamorro's *Inscripciones Latinas en Monumentos Costa-*

*ricenses* (San Jose, 1979) which, it transpired, is a well-illustrated and stoutly constructed volume of not Latino but lapidary Latin inscriptions on Costarican funeral monuments, two dozen of them illustrated, transcribed, translated and lavishly (224pp including plates) explicated, from the historic ANIMAM COELO (Chamorro would have preferred CAELO but is an honest recorder) DEDIT PAUPERIBUSQUE BONA of 1860 to HODIE MIHI CRAS TIBI of 1941, with a sundial and the Supreme Election Tribunal's rubber stamp (Vox Populi, Vox Dei) thrown in.

I doubt if Faustino Chamorro had the English market much in mind but if he had, I've bad news for him. If there was an Olympics of unsaleability, he'd be up there on the podium while the band played "Costa Rica, 'tis of thee".

But perhaps I should add that it is in excellent condition apart from some dense bibliographical annotations on the title and several British Library stamps (including a "with-drawn" stamp; do you take me for a book rustler?) strewn about. I am open to offers.

\* \* \*

Consuming, or at least scanning, several hundred titles in an hour while never actually reading a book, creates an odd cognitive state. What stops one going spine-titre-crazy or into the special kinds of alpha rhythm epilepsy that come from reading twenty-four lines a second is silly internal repartee with familiar titles: *Hi there Queer things about Japan*, good to see you, *Lax of Poplar*, how are *Honore of Barking* and *Enormous of Wapping*? Greetings to *Watts on the Mind* and *Brain on Nervous Diseases* and *Payn on the kidneys* and *Miles on the horse's hoof* and *Head on Beer* and *Rust Smut Mildew and Mould* (there's nothing like them for curing a cold) and my current favourite *Böhm on the Flute*. I hear the distant voice of Inspector Clouseau complain: "But you can't go Böhm on a flöte; only on a drum."

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## NB

## A bad kind of service

Anthony Glees

Former Intelligence officers have often tried to write about their professional duties. Some of them, like Conipion Mackenzie, have been prevented from publishing. (Mackenzie got his own back by writing a spoof on MI6.) Others, like Sir John Masterman, whose *Double Cross System* was first published in New Haven in 1972, managed to get away with it. Peter Wright has in the past made public his views on the security services without being banned – in Granada Television's interview with him, broadcast on July 16, 1984, and in Chapman Pincher's two books, *Their Trade is Treachery* and *Too Secret Too Long*. Despite this, however, it is impossible to review in detail *Spycatcher*, which he wrote with Paul Greengrass, because the British Government's decision to suppress the book has been upheld by the Law Lords. The Granada interview and the Chapman Pincher books, though, make it possible to undertake a wider survey of the *Spycatcher* affair. (In order to comply with legal restraints, detailed references are given to show that *Spycatcher* is not the source of any of my comments.)

In 1976, Peter Wright retired as one MI5's "elite molehunters"; he had headed a section responsible for attempting to unravel the secrets of "Stalin's Englishmen" – and women – [Granada TV Transcript, p. 3], an investigation into Soviet penetration of British Intelligence since the Second World War. Wright worked at the heart of MI5, with the power and prestige that this entailed.

Yet he did not leave "the Office" a happy man. For one thing, he was – so he has said – troubled by his small pension entitlement. For another, his one overriding aim had not been fulfilled: he had retired without being able to prove that Roger Hollis, Director General of MI5 from 1956 until 1965, had been the Soviet super-mole whose existence explained the catalogue of counter-espionage failures Wright thought he had identified in MI5 from 1940 to 1965.

The apparently miserable pension and the Hollis case combined to drive an already hard and obsessional man into producing a testament which has been accorded an amazingly wide circulation. Wright has sold his story, not once but several times over – to Sidgwick and Jackson, to Granada Television and now to

Heinemann and Viking Penguin, the publishers of *Spycatcher*. Chapman Pincher's place as collaborator (in fact he added much sensitive material from other sources) has been taken by Paul Greengrass. Wright and Greengrass have produced a book said to be far more elegant than Pincher's *Their Trade is Treachery* and superficially more plausible and authentic, too, since it is written in the first person. Yet the polished prose should not make one any less sceptical about the distortions and obsessions of the man who broods behind it.

*Spycatcher* has become perhaps the most important publishing event of the decade. But what makes the British Government still so reluctant in its opposition to its publication? After all, one of Britain's most senior judges, Lord Bridge (a former Chairman of the Security Commission, the secret services' watchdog), argues that the attempt to ban the book in Britain despite its publication abroad is the "first step" towards totalitarianism. These are very strong words, and coming on top of media and political pressure, they will severely threaten the Government's position. Indeed, they could mean that *Spycatcher* will become a literary Westland, or a Belgrano between two covers which might destroy those intent on fighting Wright in Britain and throughout the world.

On the *Spycatcher* issue, however, the Government is right. No Government could allow such a book by a recently retired officer in the secret services, to be published unvetted. To do so would undermine both national security and the confidence of our allies (chiefly the United States) in our ability to protect it.

What of the argument that such a view may have been reasonable but that publication of the book outside the United Kingdom changes the position entirely? Certainly, Viking's publication makes the Government look stupid and the Kremlin, no doubt, has already bought its copy, but this does not mean that it is wrong, politically or morally, to continue to insist on suppressing the book in its present form. For if publication overseas were to make British publication permissible, then it would be open to every Intelligence officer to adopt the same strategy. This would make all further intelligence work impossible, and MI5 and MI6 might as well pack up their bags and go home.

Although the press may have a duty to try to uncover secrets, where national security is truly affected the Government has a duty to main-

tain them. This is not a blanket justification of secrecy (of which there is far too much in Britain) but a plea for differentiation between things that really must be kept secret and things that need not be kept secret at all.

Wright, who was paid to protect Great Britain from traitors, has himself become one. By speaking in public about recent intelligence operations (to Granada Television and to Chapman Pincher – both of whom are merely his conduits, and whose conduct is not in question) he may be said to have done damage comparable with that caused by the spies he was paid to catch and with the actions of Blunt, Philby and the rest who revealed the names of British operations and agents in an earlier era.

The historical debate about British Intelligence and Communist subversion during the 1930s and 1940s is a very necessary one, avoided for far too long, mainly because of an understandable desire to escape the horrible excesses of McCarthyism. No one would have benefited from a "Committee on un-British activities". But the secrecy surrounding this matter was counterproductive, fuelling innuendo rather than smothering it. The past cannot be wished away and there are now plenty of books which seek to explore this topic.

Yet *Spycatcher* may prove harmful to Great Britain for quite another reason. This has to do with Wright's obsession with Hollis [see Pincher's *Inside Story*, 2nd edn, 1978, pp. 92-3 and *Their Trade is Treachery*, 2nd edn, 1982; *Too Secret Too Long*, 1984, and my own book, *The Secrets of the Service*, 1987] which threatens to do significant damage to British security policy. Hollis and Wright disagreed profoundly about the sort of security service a liberal democracy like Britain ought to possess [The *Secrets of the Service*, pp. 161, 174, 297]. The publicity surrounding *Spycatcher* must not be allowed to disguise the dangers of Wright's conception of what MI5 ought to be doing – which he communicated to Pincher and Granada Television. His vision is one no sane democrat could ever applaud.

It is important to recall that when Mrs Thatcher told Parliament on March 26, 1981 that Sir Roger Hollis had been under suspicion of being a Soviet agent (stating quite categorically that a review of the charges found him innocent) she added that "in an open society we must have security services and they must

Continued on page 1000

## In brief

John Calder, who gained a reputation in the 1960s for publishing banned writers (Henry Miller, William Burroughs, Hubert Selby Jr., and others) has turned his old crusading zeal on its head. This week he publishes *Tass Is Authorized to Announce*, a novel of espionage by Julian Semyonov who joins the small number of officially approved Soviet authors to be published in Great Britain. In Semyonov's novel it's the Western agents who are ugly and sinister. Mr Calder, endearingly admitting that his name is more commonly associated with "literature of a more highbrow nature", expects *Tass* to be his most commercially successful title in years. First published in 1979, the book has sold 2.5 million copies in the Soviet Union. Semyonov claims to have had the ear of the late Yuri Andropov who, after some doubts about the subject matter, gave his personal permission for the book to be published. Asked at a press conference in London this week if he would have ventured underground had the then Chairman of the KGB withheld permission, Semyonov bashfully replied: "Compromise is necessary if you wish to communicate the majority of your ideas." He added that it was better, if possible, to publish in your own country. Mr Calder, when asked, was able to name only one Russian writer on his list who, for whatever reason, had not been able to publish in the motherland. But he gave his full backing to Semyonov's policy of compromise: "It's better to work within the system and fight censorship little by little."

*Error of Judgment*, the investigation into the Birmingham pub bombings by Chris Mullin, is to be published in Britain by the Irish publisher Poolbeg on September 25. The book challenges the convictions of six Irishmen who have each spent thirteen years in prison. *Error of Judgment* helped persuade the Home Secretary to reopen the case, and Mullin now claims to have traced three men who, he says, were responsible for the bombings. Why, then, is the book not being put out by a major British paperback publisher? In a letter to the *Book-seller* on September 4, Mullin complained that no paperback publisher in the UK would "touch" his book, and that some even refused to read it, saying there was no market either for Irish books or books about miscarriages of justice. Mullin, now an MP, also says that to achieve the convictions "the British legal system has been bent from top to bottom". One editor who refused the book twice is Sally Gaminara, formerly of Penguin and now of Corgi. "On the contrary," she says of Mullin's accusations, "there's plenty of room for those types of books. We turned it down with great misgivings. In fact, we advised the Irish publishers to go for it, saying they would have a success and also make a profit." Since Poolbeg have already subscribed 13,500 copies, it appears they've made one.

Though agreements are yet to be completed, Bill Buford, the determinedly entrepreneurial American editor of the successful literary magazine, *Granta*, which is published in association with Penguin books, is planning to start publishing a select list of *Granta* books. One author who should benefit from Buford's promotional and commercial talents is John Berger, many of whose works have gone out of print in Britain (though they are very successfully promoted in the United States) by the failure of the less economically dynamic, if communal, British enterprise, Writers and Readers. Buford is proposing to publish the English edition of Berger's latest book, *Once in Europe*, and other of his writings which are now unavailable. Berger says of the prospect of being published by Buford: "I really do admire what *Granta* has done. It's international, new and does appeal to young readers. I hope I will be read by young people who have never heard of me." His young audience may also be increased by the opening of this week at The Other Place, Stratford, of the R&C production of his first play, *A Question of Geography*, a "Chekhovian" drama about the Gulag which he wrote with Nella Blaiski.

Reporters J. C. McGarrin, Hazel Hill and Isabel Fonseca.

## Letters

## 'Writers for Sale'

Sir, – As someone who has for years been urging Günter Grass to spearhead a change in author-publisher relationships it gives me no pleasure of the "I told you so" kind to read Michael Hofmann's report of the sale of Luchterhand (September 4-11).

German writers have no agents, and as a result their foreign and subsidiary rights are handled by their publishers, who take 30 per cent of these earnings. In this situation writers are virtually assigning their copyright.

British writers are not quite so badly off, mainly because most of them have agents, but at a time when large publishing houses are being taken over almost weekly, we have no reason to feel smug or secure. The only way that a writer can ensure that his or her life's work is not suddenly the property of an alien corporation is to sign contracts which give the publisher a limited licence. Ten years is the recommended term, to allow for sub-licensing of paperback rights. Writers who sign away their copyright for the full term are being very foolish.

EVA FIGES.  
Writers' Guild of Great Britain, 430 Edgware Road, London W2.

## 'Anti-Calvinists'

Sir, – I have been following with interest the controversy in your columns about my recently published book *Anti-Calvinists*, but Ian Green's letter (September 4-11) compels me to intervene personally. Like Kevin Sharpe, he ascribes to me a "two-party model" of Calvinist versus Arminian. A more thorough reading of my book, however, would reveal the existence of a third, Puritan, category. My discussion explicitly recognizes a variety of possible positions within these three groupings. (Calvinist and Puritan, of course, overlap.) When I apply any of these labels to a particular individual the evidence is carefully spelt out. Contrary to Sharpe's claim that my "use of the word Calvinist is vague", it is quite clearly defined in terms of absolute as opposed to conditional predestination. Such usage, moreover, has early seventeenth-century warrant.

Sharpe also misrepresents the historiographical position. He implies that my researches have been overtaken by Harry Porter's admirable *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge*, published when I was a seventeen-year-old schoolboy! This book was in fact my original point of departure. Similarly, Sharpe brackets Peter Lake and Peter White as if they were in agreement. But, as readers of the recent *Past and Present* debate about Arminianism will know, Lake and White are in reality on opposite sides. More seriously, with all his talk about a failure to "engage", Sharpe completely ignores the extent to which Patrick Collinson, Peter Lake and myself have collaborated in trying to produce a more viable account of early Stuart religious history.

Most disappointing of all, however, is the essential negativism of Sharpe and Green. Behind their call for a "subtler" interpretation appears to lurk the tired old notion of an Anglican via media. Historians are in business to explain the past, and for this they require appropriate analytical terms. The latter are bound to be imperfect, yet Kevin Sharpe and Ian Green are noticeably backward in suggesting any alternative terminology, to mine.

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## Poets of Protest

Sir, – The title of Michael Horowitz's letter (August 14), as well as its content, is highly misleading. The "unabating" protest of a Soviet poet can hardly be associated with permission to travel all over the world, with regular publication of his works in hundreds of thousands of copies, let alone with the State's award and election to the Secretariat of the Union of Soviet Writers. Not to mention all sorts of privileges which the Soviet élite still enjoys, e.g. a spacious flat in Moscow, a dacha in Pribludkino, a second house on the Black Sea.

On the poet's protest (Gorbenevskaya)

Ratushinskaya, to name but two) and those who never participated in a collective appraisal of any *Herr omnes* (Brodsky for one) have always been "denied a chalice at the feast of the fatherland". For all his ignorance of Russian poetry and the part it plays in the intellectual and spiritual life of Russian society, Mr Horowitz should be aware, even from the classic model lives of Mandelstam, Tsvetaeva and Akhmatova, that the degree of the poet's lack of well-being in Russia almost always directly depends on his or her nonconformism.

What kind of punishment must a Russian poet endure in order to become inaccessible to envy? Or perhaps I fail to understand what inner needs force the "poet-anarchist", as some of Horowitz's admirers call him, to defend a Soviet millionaire against an exiled Russian poet? And defend he does with admirable consistency. On December 11, 1981, and February 5, 1982, in these columns, Horowitz vigorously defended another Soviet pop-star, once a candidate for the Lenin prize, Andrei Voznesensky, against Brodsky, eg. Voznesensky "has suffered virtually non-stop harassment and attempted suppression of his private writing and public reading career ever since it began in 1958". Horowitz fails to mention that between 1960 and 1981 Voznesensky published at least fifteen books of poetry, in total over a million and a half copies; that he has been awarded the Lenin Komsomol prize for his long poem about Lenin, and in 1964 when Brodsky was tasting almost every item on the State's menu of harassment, arrest, beatings, incarceration in prisons and mental institutions, humiliating trial, Voznesensky's *Anti-Worlds* was published by the Central Committee of the Komsomol. Both Yevtushenko and Voznesensky have managed to publish their three volumes of collected works while the Soviet reader does not have access to the complete works of Mandelstam or Tsvetaeva, and has a distorted picture of Brodsky's work.

In 1972 Brodsky was given a one-way ticket to the West on the personal advice of Yevtushenko to Andropov himself. This, it seems to me, cancels out any ethical grounds for Horowitz's position. As for his aesthetic judgement, we cannot take it seriously since Horowitz can read Russian poetry only in translation. As a poet himself, he knows that real poetry can never be improved in translation, even by the poet's own hands, but this is possible, unfortunately, in the case of mediocre poetry.

Critics and poets who can read Voznesensky and Yevtushenko in Russian understood a long time ago that their critiques of Soviet society never go beyond the limits of acceptable criticism. Even in *Baby Yar* Yevtushenko condemned a Nazi crime not a Soviet one: the rest is strong rhetoric, as any English reader can see from the quotation which was given by Horowitz. Whether in or out of official favour, Yevtushenko maintains, as he has put it, "a proud and difficult faith in the revolution".

These days Yevtushenko is very proud that Russia is ruled by the men who have been "brought up" on his poetry. Indeed, the whole world can see the difference between them and those who never read poetry (Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Chernenko) as well as those who were "poets" themselves (Stalin, Andropov). It is a pity that they are not in a hurry to return to Russia her best poets from exile either in person or book form. When Russia is ruled by the men brought up on Brodsky's poetry there will be no need to deracinate the poets from their language and people and rob the latter spiritually and culturally.

VALENTINA POLUKHINA.  
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In last week's issue, one of the poems short-listed for the TLS/Cheltenham Festival of Literature Poetry Competition – no 23, "Looking for the Celts" – was printed with its two stanzas reversed. After the epigraph, the poem should begin: "The Duchess of Mecklenburg straightens her back". We apologize to the author for this mistake.

The judges have now made their choice, and we look forward to the readers' verdict. The prize-giving on October 11 at 12.45 has been moved to Cheltenham Town Hall.

## Appraising Translations

Sir, – Roy Harris's article, "The ephemerality of translation" (August 28), interesting as it is on a number of points, does not seem to me to make a case for the "ephemerality of late twentieth-century translation" being "of a different order altogether from that of earlier periods". The "great translations of the past" are still there for us to enjoy, as Harris himself concedes: they are there for the same reason as the other great literature of the past is still there. Dryden's translation of Virgil remains as some of the finest English verse of the seventeenth century. If modern versions are ephemeral, it will be because they are – like most current translations of the Bible – in language which would not secure the survival of current "original" literary work, most of which can be counted upon to disappear from view in a short time.

Harris appears to be more interested in the conceptual background of translation than in the quality of the literary work. This is, of course, a perfectly legitimate approach, but if it is pursued to the point of denying the importance or even the existence of literary values it becomes simply irrelevant for the literate reader, including, inevitably, the poet who attempts translations himself. I am not asserting that Harris goes that far. When he says: "A translation of the *Aeneid* is not an evocative resuscitation of Virgil but a reading of Virgil", the only question I would raise is whether a "reading" of any literary value must

not include an element of "evocative resuscitation". How can it be otherwise?

The considerations in the mind of the poet-translator are obviously different from those uppermost for the analyst, and the explanations of the one will inevitably seem incomplete to the other. There is no space to pursue the point here, but I may perhaps refer Roy Harris and others to my Jackson Knight Memorial Lecture ("The Poet and the Translator", University of Exeter, 1984).

C. H. SISSON.  
Moorfield Cottage, The Hill, Langport, Somerset.

Sir, – I wonder if, in his review of Ralph Manheim's translation of Günter Grass's *The Rat* (August 28), G. P. Butler really feels justified in lumping Manheim's "Americanisms" together with putative infelicities, slips of the pen, flaws and other peccabillies.

Perhaps so, if "Americanisms" is a pejorative. I know I would find it intrusive and dislocating had *die Mäzen* (or whatever) been rendered by "birds" instead of "broads". Obviously, Murray's *common* does not extend to words of this type and, as the great man has put it, "no one man's English is all English".

But I can report to you that, at least in the edition of *The Rat* I have, Mr Manheim has been color-coordinated, his "jello" matched to his "honor" and so forth.

ROBERT L. MOORE.  
130 West 78th Street, New York, New York 10024.

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Connie Bentley's most recent collection of poems is *Moving In*, 1984.

John Burnett is Professor of Social History at Brunel University. He is joint editor (with David Vincent and David Mayall) of *The Autobiography of the Working Class*. Volume One of which, dealing with the period 1790-1900, appeared in 1984; Volume Two, which covers 1900 to 1945, is reviewed on page 992.

J. A. Burrow is Wintestock Professor of English at Bristol University, and author of *The Ages of Man*, 1986. Roger Cardinal is the author of *Figures of Reality: A perspective on the poetic imagination*, 1981, and *Expressionism*, 1984.

Humphrey Carpenter's books include *W. H. Auden: A biography*, 1981, and *The Inklings*, 1978. His *Genius Together*, a study of American writers in Paris in the 1920s, will be published shortly.

M. T. Clanchy's *From Memory to Written Record*, 1979, was reissued in paperback earlier this year. Patrick Collinson has recently been appointed to the Regius Chair of Modern History at Cambridge. His books include *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*, 1983.

David Coward is a lecturer in French at the University of Leeds, and author of *The Dreyfus Affair*, 1983. His *Journal de la Bretagne* is due to appear next year.

George Craig is Reader in French in the School of European Studies at the University of Sussex. Martin Dodsworth is Professor of English at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London.

D. J. Enright's *The Alluring Problem: An essay on irony* appeared last year. His *Collected Poems 1987* is published this week.

Alan Forrest is Senior Lecturer in French History at the University of Manchester. His books include *The French Revolution and the Poor*, 1981, which was translated into French last year.

Norman Gash's most recent book, *Pillars of Government and other essays on state and society c.1770-c.1880*, was published last year. His two-volume biography of Sir Robert Peel was reissued in paperback in 1985.

Ernest Gellner is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. His *Relativism and the Social Sciences* and *The Psychoanalytic Movement* were both published in 1985.

Anthony Glees's book *The Secrets of the Service: British Intelligence and Communist subversion 1939-51* appeared earlier this year. He is a lecturer in Contemporary History and Politics at Brunel University.

Victoria Glendinning is the author of *Vita: The life of V. Sackville-West*, 1983, and *Rebecca West*, 1987.

John F. C. Harrison is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Sussex. His books include *The Early Victorians 1832-1851*, published in 1971, and *The Common People*, 1984.

Robert Irwin's books include *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The early Manik Sultanate 1250-1382*, which was published in 1986.

Jonathan Keates's novel *The Strangers' Gallery* was reviewed in the TLS of August 28.

John Keep is Professor of History at the University of Toronto. His most recent book is *Soldiers of the Tsar: Russian army and society, 1463-1874*, which appeared in 1985.

Eric Korn is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

Shenn Mackay's new collection of short stories, *Dreams of Dead Women's Handbags*, was published last month.

David Martin currently holds the Elizabeth Scurlock Professorship in Human Values at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. His books include *Dilemmas of Contemporary Religion*, 1978.

Lauro Martines is Professor of Renaissance History at the University of California at Los Angeles, and author of *Power and Imagination: City-states in Renaissance Italy*, 1979.

Jonathan Mirsky is China Specialist of the Observer.

Jasper Ridley's *Henry VIII*, 1984, was reissued in paperback in June. His other books include *The Statesman and the Family: Thomas Wolsey and Thomas More*, 1982, and *The Life and Times of Mary Tudor*, 1974.

Mark Ridley is a Fellow of St Catherine's College, Cambridge. His *Evolution and Classification: The reformation of cladism and Animal Behaviour* were both published last year.

Jane Roberts is Curator of the Print Room of the Royal Library at Windsor Castle.

S. P. Rosenbaum's *Victorian Bloomsbury*, the first volume of his early literary history of the Bloomsbury Group, was published in February.

Carol Rumens's most recent volume of poetry, *Selected Poems*, and her novel, *Plain Park*, were both published in March.

A. W. B. Simpson's *Legal Theory and Legal History: Essays on the common law* was published recently. Anne Summers is Wellcome Research Fellow at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, Oxford. Her *Angels and Citizens: British women as military nurses, 1854-1914*, will be published next year.

John Sutherland is Professor in the Division of Humanities at the California Institute of Technology. His most recent book is *Offensive Literature: Censorship in Britain, 1960-1982*, published in 1982.

Charles Townsend's books include *Political Violence in Ireland: Government and resistance since 1848*, which appeared in 1983.

John Turner is a lecturer in History at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, and the editor of *Businessmen and Politics*, 1984.

William Twining is Quain Professor of Jurisprudence at University College London. His most recent publications are *Theories of Evidence: Bentham and Wigmore*, 1985, and *Legal Theories and Common Law*, 1986.

Eugen Weber is Joan Paley Professor of Modern European History at the University of California at Los Angeles. His *France, 1789-1814*, was published last year.

Bryan Wilson's most recent book is *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 1982.

## Nicaraguan Bookfair

Amanda Hopkinson

Nicaragua's Bookfair, brainchild of the Ministry of Information, was held in the last week of July, immediately following celebrations of the Eighth anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution. It took place in La Píñata, a concreted marketplace square before the Autonomous Catholic University in Managua. The stands were on loan from Frankfurt Bookfair and participants were invited to bring two copies of each book for donation to the National Library. (One copy to be "decentralized" to a provincial university, in case another earthquake were to destroy Managua again), and up to three for sale.

Outside La Píñata, queues of eager customers started to form hours before the gates were due to open. The crowds remained good-humoured, despite the alternating rainstorms and heatwaves, and although it was clear that many were bound to be disappointed. For Nicaragua's enormously successful literacy campaigns have created a readership in search of books. But the United States' economic blockade not only effectively prevents the import of books from outside the socialist countries but also denies Nicaragua much-needed print machinery and materials.

During the week of the Fair the Minister of Culture, the poet and priest Ernesto Cardenal, became a familiar sight in his peasant smock and black beret; Vice President Sergio Ramírez invited participants to attend a talk on the country's dire economic circumstances and requested international assistance in supplying

books. (His most recent collections of essays and short stories were available in a number of different foreign editions.) Gioconda Belli (of the Ministry of Education and the Women's Organisation, AMNLAE) signed some of the 15,000 copies of her latest poems published by the literary company of Nueva Nicaragua.

Among the foreigners invited to attend the fair as cultural delegates, the South African author Dennis Brutus read poems that later reached a wider audience through translation in the cultural weekly *Ventana*. Billy Bragg sang "Nicaragua Nicaragua", and Wolfgang Niedeken, and his West German rock band shouted incomprehensible accolades in Cologne dialect. The United States Information Service had interpreted their invitation to bring up to five copies of any one book as permission to distribute 7,000 free copies of Shirley Christian's anti-Sandinista *Revolution in the Family*. The independent United States publishers muttered about a "Disinformation Service". Alice Walker, who was at La Píñata to speak at sessions on women's writing, refused to sign copies of *The Colour Purple* at their stand.

Sixty countries attending the Fair, represented 173 publishing houses. Their very different displays reflected national preoccupations. A large photographic exhibition of Iraqi war atrocities was mounted on an Iranian stand. North Koreans surrounded a solemn portrait of Kim Il Sung with stacks of leather-bound tomes of his speeches. Equally daunting were the thirty-eight identical white volumes of the works of Lenin, donated in bulk by Russia.

and heaped as wind-breaks by disrespectful workers. A director of IMELSA, the state importing company whose bookstore basements are piled high with the works of Russian leaders, explained: "No one, either in the USA or the USSR, can understand that if we haven't got to Communism eight years into our Revolution, there's not much chance of our being converted now".

The British stand was inundated daily by Nicaraguan teachers and students keen to learn about our traditions, asking questions on anything from homeopathic remedies to under-represented folklore. Workers from various institutions begged for dictionaries, basic medical and economic digests. British books analysing world politics and the international debt. The presence of the radical religious publishers, Search Press, and of three feminist publishing houses (Pandora, Virago, and Women's Press) was a source of continuing wonder.

When the National Library reopened last January for the first time in fifteen years (it has been closed since the devastating 1972 earthquake), it had a mere 35,000 books. These have since been swelled by bequests from a North American collector, Paul Bundy (10,000), from the late Argentine author Julio Cortázar (1,500) and from the Bookfair itself (a further 40,000). According to its director Eliana Rodríguez, what is now needed is the capital to catalogue, track and protect the collection from insects. "Nicaragua is a country where we are starving, and we're proud of that. But the hunger for books is also a real one."







# A tangle of traditions

Robert Irwin

PATRICIA CRONE.  
*Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*  
300pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.  
01631 155961

Over a hundred years ago Ernest Renan observed that unlike the other great world religions, "Islam was born in the full light of history." In view of the way historians have since dealt with Islam, this has been mixed blessing. In the 1920s, Henri Lammens, the Jesuit historian and polemicist, sketched out the political and economic milieu in which Muhammad grew up and which gave birth to Islam. Following his lead, a fantastically elaborate vision of the early economy of the Hijaz region has been worked out. According to it, seventh-century Mecca straddled one of the world's great commercial crossroads. A mercantile aristocracy of the Quraysh Arabs profited from the spice-laden caravans coming from South Arabia as well as from the international transit trade in luxury goods. The protection they sold to the regular seasonal caravans made the Quraysh rich and, perhaps, ideologically restless. Marxists like Maxime Rodinson have gone on to argue that, as "a mercantile economy was growing up in the clinks of a nomadic world", the ensuing social and economic transformations engendered a growing dissatisfaction with the old Arabian paganism. New conditions called for a new religion: the Prophet, then, was a man for his times. It is a fantastic vision indeed.

As Patricia Crone points out in *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, Mecca was very poorly placed to straddle any sort of commercial crossroads, and the severely reduced demand for incense and spices in impoverished seventh-century Christendom could hardly have supported the elaborate and prosperous economy that has been wished on Mecca by modern Western historians. The classical sources (Pliny and the *Periplus*) which Lammens used to support his case for a flourishing spice trade route refer to the first and second centuries AD and not to any later period. Crone shows, and sources in Arabic do not suggest that the Prophet's contemporaries did any significant trade in spices and luxury goods.

For testimony about what life was like in Mecca in the Prophet's time, we are dependent almost entirely on *hadiths* (orally transmitted narratives relating deeds or utterances of the Prophet and his contemporaries). Dr Crone does not believe in *hadiths* or, rather, she does not believe that it is possible to use them to construct a picture of life in the seventh-century Hijaz. However, in the second part of the book, in a methodologically eccentric *tour de*

force, she uses the information which seems to be offered by the *hadiths* to assemble what is in her eyes a hypothetical, almost certainly fictitious, construct: the "real" trade of Mecca in the seventh century. It is rather as though a hard-nosed English medievalist had set out as an exercise to describe the import-export trade in King Arthur's Britain—as it may be deduced from sources like "The Romance of Beroul" and "The High Quest of the Holy Grail". Though Crone's manner of proceeding is bizarre, it is also logical. First, she demonstrates that the relators of *hadiths* in the eighth and later centuries thought that the Meccans traded not in spices, but in leather. Second, a ruthless examination of the proliferating and mutually contradictory *hadith* stories suggests that the men who told *hadiths* about Meccan commerce had no better sources of information about it than we have today. Leather seemed plausible to them, as spices seemed plausible to Lammens.

The fabrication of *hadiths* for exegetical, polemical or juristic purposes has long been recognized as a factor behind the swelling bulk of traditions about the Prophet and his times. It is true that there are many *hadiths* which seem to have no overt exegetical or polemical aims, but, since they contradict one another many times over, few at best of them can be true. How did they come into existence? In one of her book's most original and important sections, Crone draws attention to the role of story-tellers, in giving accounts of the Prophet and his times which both entertained and edi-

## High culture and base fears

M. T. Clanchy

R. I. MOORE.  
*The Formation of a Persecuting Society*  
168pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50.  
01631 137467

An alternative title for R. I. Moore's book might be "Lepers, Heretics and Jews: Outcasts of medieval society". He prefers *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* because he wishes to take a wider view. His contention is that the period 950-1250 in Western Europe witnessed a fundamental and irreversible change in the attitude to deviants. The "persecuting society" formed in the high Middle Ages is the forerunner and origin of the atrocities of the religious wars and persecutions of the Reformation period, and the Holocaust of the twentieth century. There was not just a persecuting medieval Catholic Church, with its inquisition and distinguishing dress for Jews and lepers, but a persecuting society. Persecution started from the top, and not from popular prejudice, as is usually argued. "Heretics and Jews owed their persecution in the first place not to the hatred of the people, but to the decisions of princes and prelates"; princes like Henry II of England or the Emperor Frederick II, and prelates like St Bernard or Pope Innocent III.

Moore is reacting here against the previous generation of historians, who sought to overcome the anti-Catholic prejudices of G. G. Coulton and others by ignoring the uglier side of medieval religion. Thus Sir Richard Southern succeeded in writing *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (1970) with only a page devoted to Jews and heretics and none to lepers. Moore takes issue also with Bernard Hamilton's more recent *The Medieval Inquisition* (1981), which argues that persecution welled up from mob violence and lynchings, which the Church tried to restrain by imposing the rule of law through its inquisition.

Moore's most imaginative step is to link the persecution of heretics, Jews and lepers together, whereas they have hitherto been dealt with as unconnected phenomena. He points out that heresy was associated with contagious disease and sometimes explicitly with leprosy. "For all imaginative purposes heretics, Jews and lepers were interchangeable. They had the same qualities, from the same source, and they presented the same threat through them the Devil was at work to subvert the Christian order and bring the world to chaos." But why had the Devil not been at work before the year 950? Moore's answer is that it was not of course a question of when or

fied their audiences. Like story-tellers everywhere, they selected themes and wove variants upon them. Plot motifs about Meccan trade with the Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia and Persia were transferred, combined, inverted and elaborated to create what came close to a plenum of story-telling possibilities. *Hadith* narration seems a fruitful area for future research by those with an interest in oral patterns in story-telling or in Proppian structuralism.

Crone also argues, with the appearance of niggling, that pre-Islamic Mecca was never a shrine capable of offering a religiously sanctioned security to visiting merchants. In addition, she suggests that the original Mecca was not in the Hijaz but on the edges of southern Syria—which hostile readers may feel must have called for a positively miraculous mass amnesia on the part of the inhabitants of both sites. However, the argument about the Hijazi economy and the sources for that economy is the core of the book and that argument is cogent and persuasive. It raises a crucial question about the Prophet's audience: If there were no crafty Quraysh oligarchs in Mecca, whom was he talking to? *Meccan Trade* is a brilliant book, which puts the onus of defence on upholders of the traditional orientalist views of the origins of Islam. Whether its conclusions are accepted or not, it should not in future be possible to write about these origins in the same casual way, nipping and tucking mutually contradictory stories to make them fit. We know much less about the birth of one of the world's great religions than we thought we did.

where the Devil was really at work but of how he was perceived. The workings of the Devil were an intellectual construct, just as the workings of the medieval God were a construct of scholastic theology.

Moore argues further that the new intellectuals, the clerical and *literati* of the twelfth-century Renaissance, felt threatened by those they persecuted. The Jews they saw as their rivals in the higher echelons of government, finance, learning and medicine. As for heretics like the Cathars, they were thought to undermine the Christian social order altogether. The Waldensians on the other hand, like the lepers who were the lowest and most wretched members of the community, stood for all the *rustici* and *pauperes* who threatened to poison decent society. Thus there was formed a rhetoric of persecution: "the establishment of the high culture demanded the ruthless elimination of its actual and potential rivals".

The argument as a whole forms a fundamental work of historical sociology, as important in its way as the works of Georges Duby and Marc Bloch. The greatest centuries of the Middle Ages are seen here in a dark and pessimistic light. Extrapolating from Moore's argument, the high culture of scholasticism and Gothic art was built on fear and prejudice. The blindfold personification of the Synagogue at Strasbourg cathedral has cause to bow her head, as have all the damned who are weighed in the balance at the Last Judgment.

Such a courageous and wide-ranging thesis is easy to criticize. Did the rich variety of medieval states really comprise a "single régime"? How pervasive was the "persecuting society"? One exception is seen in Henry III's warning to Bishop Grosseteste in 1252 that his inquisition was an unprecedented harassment of the poor and defamations of good Christians; the inquisitions were interfering with the cultivation of the fields and other necessary temporal duties. Hence there was no Roman inquisition in thirteenth-century England, and yet the Lollards in the next century demonstrated that England too was a persecuting society. And had there really been so little persecution in the centuries preceding 950? In the period of the conversions, penalties for non-Christians had sometimes been draconian, as in Charlemagne's legislation against the pagan Saxons. Arguably, Christianity had been a persecuting religion from the time of the conversion of Constantine; if not earlier, Moore's book inevitably has gaps and controversial statements because it is an interpretative essay rather than a comprehensive review of scholarship.

Moore's book is a valuable contribution to the study of the formation of the persecuting society in the high Middle Ages. It is a pity that such a learned and useful book should have been somewhat imperfectly edited and proof-read: there are misprints, especially in Latin. I cannot believe that the monks of Evesham who wrote the *Historia Regum* (see p. 320) described Richard I as "the most wicked and cruel king of the English" (p. 321) if the author had known that

## Chronicles

J. A. Burrow

JOHN TAYLOR.  
*English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century*  
349pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30.  
019820065 X

For non-historians such as the present reviewer, the title of this book may need some elucidation. What is "historical literature"? The term *literature* here serves to exclude hard "record evidence" from consideration, while the epithet *historical* excludes "purely literary writings" at the other, soft end of the scale. What remains is a somewhat miscellaneous gathering of texts, all of them interesting for one reason or another to the modern historian of fourteenth-century England. Chief among these, of course, are the chronicles: the *Brut*, Higden's *Polychronicon*, Walsingham's *Chronica*, the *Anonimale* *Chronicle*, and Froissart's *Chroniques*. But John Taylor also devotes chapters to "Letters and Letter Collections" and "Political Poems and Ballads"; and in this respect he casts his net wider than Anloia Gransden, the second volume of whose *Historical Writing in England* (1982) also covered the fourteenth century.

Although chronicles such as the *Brut* and the *Polychronicon* do reach back into past history, Dr Taylor is chiefly interested in their record of recent and current events; and texts such as the letter collections can be classed as "historical literature" only in the rather peculiar sense that they offer evidence of interest to the modern historian. Indeed, if such interest is to be the criterion of selection, one may wonder why the author rules out purely literary writings—whose "purity", after all, does not exclude testimony to the life of the times. But Taylor does not belong to the *Annales* school. He is concerned, not with *mentalités*, but with events: the wars against Scots and French, the Peasants' Revolt, the Deposition of Richard II.

Taylor's chapters on poems and letters provide useful surveys; but his main interest lies in the chronicles, and here he is an expert guide through difficult territory. In many cases, an original chronicle (itself commonly compiled from earlier writings) will have a succession of continuations, and often these continuations differ from copy to copy according to the local and political interests of the writer. Widely disseminated works such as the *Brut* or the *Polychronicon* accordingly survive not as single texts but as ramifying families of texts. Thus Taylor reprints in an appendix here his own earlier edition of one particular continuation of Higden's *Polychronicon* which incorporates passages from another chronicle written at Wigmore in Herefordshire. As well as reporting the birth of a two-headed cat in Cailestere, Oxford; and recording Latin verses celebrating the departure to Canterbury of an unpopular Bishop of Ely, these entries pay special attention to the doings of the Mortimers, the chief family of this chronicler's part of England.

Taylor devotes much of his book to tracing the intricacies of such chronicle sources, about which he is able to give considerably more detail than is to be found in Gransden's more general study; but the most interesting parts of his book are devoted to assessment of the chroniclers' evidence for two of the great events of the century: the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and the Deposition of Richard in 1399. His chapter on the latter illustrates how chronicles could serve the purposes of political propaganda. He argues convincingly that the story of Richard freely agreeing to give up his throne was "a fabrication put out by the Lancastrian regime". It appears rather that the king was tricked into leaving the security of Conway Castle and then ambushed. Taylor's discussion of the evidence for this and other events in the fall of Richard shows an expert professional historian doing what he does best.

It is a pity that such a learned and useful book should have been somewhat imperfectly edited and proof-read: there are misprints, especially in Latin. I cannot believe that the monks of Evesham who wrote the *Historia Regum* (see p. 320) described Richard I as "the most wicked and cruel king of the English" (p. 321) if the author had known that

## The story of everyday things

Patrick Collinson

CHRISTOPHER HIBBERT.  
*The English: A social history 1066-1945*  
785pp. Grafton. £20.  
0246121815

In 1950 my college history society found itself entertaining George Macaulay Trevelyan, then in his seventy-fifth year. We were all vicariously flattered when this distinguished visitor paid tribute to our youthful tutor, H. J. (now Sir John) Habakkuk as one of those admirable economic historians on whose labours social historians like Trevelyan were utterly dependent. We did not think that anyone outside Pembroke College, Cambridge, had heard of Habakkuk. But Trevelyan's *English Social History* (1944) sat on our maiden aunts' bookshelves, alongside John Buchan's *Memory Hold the Door*, Freya Stark and perhaps, already, *The God That Failed*. In truth its greyish wartime pages revealed little indebtedness to Habakkuk, or to Ashton, Fisher and others of the burgeoning school of economic historians who had done most, in the *Economic History Review* and elsewhere, to drag British historiography, most reluctantly, into the twentieth century. Instead there was a great deal of empathy for a green and pleasant land and an aura of literary culture: the Pastons and their England, Shakespeare, Parson Woodforde—a reassuring and uplifting volume written by a contemporary of Vaughan Williams.

In the years which have elapsed since Trevelyan, the academic discipline of social history has altered out of all recognition. If social historians were not too wise or at least too clever to say so they would claim that their subject has become "scientific", certainly "professional", in contrast to the studied amateurism of Trevelyan's day, and no longer marginal. We are all social historians now. Models, "heuristic devices", have been borrowed from other disciplines which are not afraid to call themselves social sciences. Manuscripts have been invoked on a massive scale. Precise measurement has become possible. With the aid of parish registers and the miraculous microchip we not only know how many people were living in England and Wales in 1600 or 1800. We probably have it in our power to know how many spinsters in eighteenth-century Wiltshire were illegitimate and living with other spinsters. We have even begun to rediscover the relevance of literature. For what is history but our response to past discourse, its form as well as its content?

There is only one problem, with which for better or worse we have to live. It is one of uncertainty about the ultimate purpose of the undertaking and about the object of study itself. We know that almost everything we touch has its place in the history of something called "society", but we also know that nothing called "society" ever existed, except in the mind, and could not be studied in its entirety if it did. (On page 601 of the present book we hear Walter Besant explaining in 1887 that no one born into trade could possibly "belong to society".) Yet social history is not an aspect or part of history on which it is possible to place defining, still less confining, limits, but history itself in, said Sir Lewis Namier, its "social aspects", or in Harold Perkin's phrase, "from the social point of view". But what is that?

These reflections are prompted by the appearance of another single-volume social history of England in something like its (post-)Conquest entirety in the manner of Trevelyan. There is a crying need for such a book. Those who have no occasion to consult the journals *Past and Present* and *History Workshop* but who read history for erudition or pleasure must be enabled to share in the fuller and relatively reliable information about past society which has by now accumulated. Professional historians owe it to amateurs to share what they know about population, marriage, households, 'familial' relationships, women, disease, landscape, economic growth and contraction, social relations in a hierarchical society, the social language of ritual religion, violence and piety, and above all the sense of the interconnections linking all these things. It is intolerable that two levels of "know-

ledge" about such matters should coexist, one of them consisting of what are now known to be myths: early marriage, large and extended families, the universality of open fields, total industrial revolution in about 1800, the employment of children an unmitigated evil, schooling an unmixed blessing. Somehow or other the gap must be bridged.

But as David Cannadine has recently complained, in the columns of the *TLS* (and in *Past and Present*), most of us in this respect are poor bridge-builders. So can we look to a different kind of professional to perform the task for us? As what the dust-jacket calls "a leading popular historian", Christopher Hibbert has tossed off books on the French Revolution and the Indian Mutiny, on Agincourt and Mussolini, Arnhem and Garibaldi, and twenty more besides. But *The English: A social history* was not written, as the saying goes, between the soup and the joint. It is a massive undertaking of nearly 800 pages, sixty chapters, 400,000 words, backed up by a bibliography containing more than 600 items. As one would expect, this reveals a heavy reliance on original sources in print of a more or less literary character: some, like the *Paston Letters*, Chaucer (in the Coghlin translation), Pepys, Cobbett and Mayhew utterly predictable; others less so—*Moritz's Travels in England in 1782* and Sophie von la

Roche. A chapter on Victorian class distinctions is very reliant on Anthony Trollope, Daisy Ashford (*The Young Visiters*) and Charles Porter. But the bibliography also lists most of the new wave of social historians: Keith Thomas, not only *Religion and the Decline of Magic* but *Man and the Natural World*; as a guide to the early modern period, Keith Wrightson's superb *English Society 1580-1680*; and J. A. Sharpe on crime, Peter Clark, Cannadine and H. J. Dyos on towns and townsmen (but not Alan Everitt or Margaret Spufford on provincial and local society), Brian Harrison on drink, Geoffrey Holmes on the professions, Rosemary O'Day on education, Alan Macfarlane on love and marriage (but Lawrence Stone rather than R. Houlbrooke on the family), G. E. Mingay on the eighteenth-century landed gentry, John Stevenson on popular disturbances. Naturally a good deal of this learning has rubbed off and has found its way into Hibbert's book, as well as some more dubious guidance, for example, that of Macfarlane's *Rise of English Individualism* and the Stones' *An Open Elite*.

But sadly, from the point of view which this reviewer represents, Hibbert has not shared in the methods or the broader purposes of the historians he has consulted—and has not tried to. He explains that his book, which is not a

work of original scholarship, is not to be mistaken for a work of synthesis either. "Not all the reading for this book has been done by myself." Evidently the works of the academics have been raided in much the same way as the primary sources, to provide, scissors-and-paste style, a colourful scrapbook of situations, cases, anecdotes and images, in the *News of the World* phrase, "all human life". Everything is glist to the mill and is cited without critical discrimination or concern for original contexts, or any sense of the rhetorical conventions and hyperbole which coloured so much past social observation.

It must be conceded that this failure of discrimination with respect to sources is by no means confined to "popular" historians. And it must also be granted that Hibbert's scrapbook is compiled with flair and skill and with enthusiasm for particularity and even oddity which no historian, "popular" or otherwise, can afford to dispense with. Who would want to lose from this book Sydney Smith's startling impact on early nineteenth-century rural Yorkshire and Yorkshire's impact on Sydney Smith (credit due to Alan Bell's witty book on a witty man); Boswell's early experiments with the ladies of the town and with primitive condoms (credit due to Boswell); the rhythms of life in a great house of the nineteenth century

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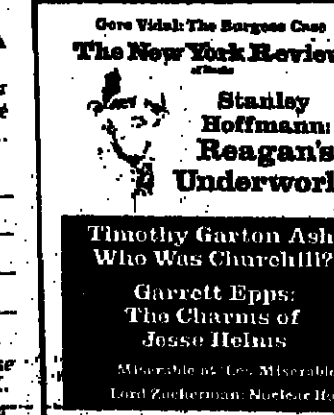
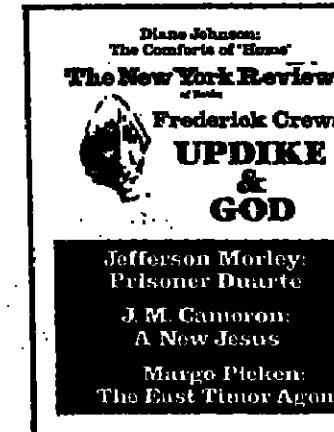
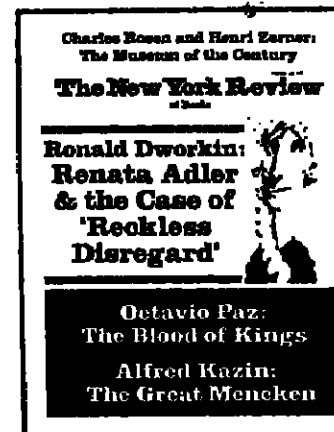
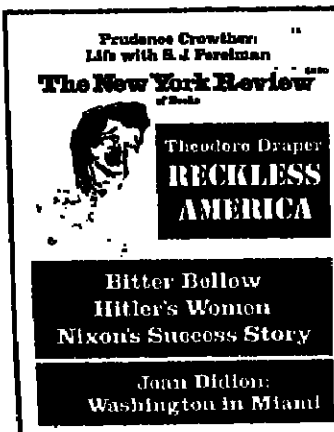
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## Basil Blackwell

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as the gong man, the lamp-and-candle men and the water men made their quotidian rounds; the maidservant to a Chiswick dentist who had to scrape the mouse-droppings off the bread and dripping before starting her breakfast; that earnest conversation between King Edward VII and Campbell-Bannerman which was captured by the *Illustrated London News* with the caption, "Is it peace or war?", when the topic was in fact whether halibut was better baked or boiled. The best chapters put together scores of such particles to make a kind of pointillist impression which as history is either very old-fashioned or very new-fashioned.

There is a great deal of this sort of excellence in Hibbert's account of the long eighteenth century, from Pepys and Defoe to Cobden and beyond, a section which occupies a third of the entire book (compared with no more than twenty or thirty rather perfunctory pages on the twentieth century) and where the author is evidently most at home, and especially in Boswell's and Johnson's (but also Dorothy George's) London. Some of these chapters are free-standing essays, such as "Theatres and Shows" and "Shops and Shopping", and are in themselves considerable achievements, worth anyone's while to read. In line with the consuming interest of today's public, all the chapters on country-house life are good. If for the Middle Ages a little too trustful (along with Mark Girouard) of etiquette books as accounts of actual social practice. Admirable too is the account of the experiences of nineteenth-century agricultural labourers and of the abuses of the Gangmaster system. (Does Hibbert know that these still persist?) In fact there is so much of interest on England between 1700 and 1900 that one wishes the author had not attempted the comprehensive social history which has elicited this review but an updated account of "everyday things" in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Clearly this is (in Trevelyan's phrase) the "history of a people with the politics left out", which is an impossible procedure and as a definition of social history no more satisfactory than Seeley's description of history itself as "past politics". A chapter (partly) devoted to the Civil War and awkwardly sandwiched be-

tween accounts of the Elizabethan theatre and of early modern schooling makes no sense whatsoever, since nothing has been otherwise said about the Crown and Parliament, or about any other political institution, event or process. The First World War arrives out of a sky more cloudless than anything seen in August 1914, since there has been no mention of any earlier wars, or of the army, or of the international scene, or of colonies, or of patriotism. And not much about the public schools either and nothing at all about the Scouts, compared with seventeen pages on prostitution, masturbation and other sexual topics.

But also left out is any engagement with the English people as an object of serious historical study, containing real but soluble problems. We do not even learn who the English people were and how they related to the environment provided by the infinitely varied English landscape. Any account of them which begins as late as 1066, when so much in the way of settlement was already determined, would have difficulty in doing this. But Hibbert does not even try and there is not a trace of sensitivity towards regionality anywhere in the book, no touch of *genius loci*, except where London is concerned. The medieval upper classes enjoy their feasts, the peasants stumble around with their tools and their rags, but we learn no more about them than the pictures in the Luttrell Psalter tell us. And that was the Middle Ages.

With the sixteenth century there is a sense of disturbance and growth but no serious investigation of its causes. We are told that after about 1596 "conditions in the countryside began to improve". What "conditions"? What "countryside"? What "improvements", with real wages at their lowest level in 500 years and the 1620s still to come? Demography, the bedrock of any seriously intended social history, is only occasionally and briefly brought into play. Social structure and social change appear even more fleetingly, at one point in a few paragraphs of a chapter on "Clothes and Class". What are we now supposed to believe about the process which E. P. Thompson called "The Making of the English Working Class"? That is not a concept to which the reader of this book is even introduced.

Hibbert's response to so much pedantic curping would presumably be to repeat what he tells us in his preface: that his book is "intended for the general reader". But this is most depressing. Why should "the general reader" (if he or she still exists) not share in the level of accurate and reasoned knowledge about our ancestors which is now in principle available, as well as in the lively debates which cluster around matters more contentious and inferential? The best of the volumes in the Pelican History of England, for example S. T. Bindoff's *Tudor England*, were no less accessible to the general, intelligent reader for being up to date with the latest scholarship. Why should the general reader be palmed off with the statement that "men and women of all classes went to the theatre" in the age of Shakespeare, when there is a continuing discussion about which classes went (and when he has been told so little about "classes" in any case as to be unable to evaluate the statement)? Why should he not be told what we now know about early modern literacy, that in the seventeenth century twice as many bakers as butchers were able to read and that early eighteenth-century London seems to have been the first city in history where a majority of women were in some degree literate? The implications of socially and occupationally differentiated literacy are of considerable importance. Why should eighteenth-century "food riots" be presented simply as riots, without reference to those strangely collusive features which led Thompson to speculate about a "moral economy", let alone to the debate which that proposition aroused?

Why, above all, should the reader learn from such a huge and apparently exhaustive account of its subject so little about how local communities in the past (and what kinds of communities) got along, managed their common affairs and responded to forces above and outside them: how they expressed their disapproval of aberrant behaviour, how it was that in some circumstances (and not in others) matters came to court and that thieves and witches were sometimes hanged? For these were the people of England who never have spoken yet, or at least so far only in the pages of *Past and Present*, not here.

Autobiography is not simply a record, but an ordering and evaluation of experience, in this case the experience of working people. Their thoughts and feelings, hopes and frustrations are here set down — perhaps as nowhere else.

The writing of autobiography, however, is an extremely complex activity and its use as historical evidence is by no means straightforward. At the risk of getting embroiled in current literary debates about the nature of autobiography, the historian cannot avoid certain problems. For instance, it is all very well to see autobiographies as working-class perceptions of the world, but the selection of memories is made in the light of the author's present conception of him or herself. In fact, the autobiography is an art form, closely akin to fiction. To probe into the motives of the autobiographer, to examine the use of language and concepts of time, to try to disentangle the sense of self, open up new vistas for the social historian. The difficulties are likely to be formidable, but the rewards great.

*Socialism, Radicalism, and Nostalgia: Social criticism in Britain, 1775-1830*, by William Stafford (304pp. Cambridge University Press, £27.50; paperback, £10.95. 0 521 32792 X) contains in Part One two chapters, on the general context considering economic and social structure, economic "conjuncture", politics and culture in the period, and on its "mental furniture"; and in Part Two essays on ten texts, which range from *The Real Rights of Man* by Thomas Spence (1775) through William Godwin's *Enquiry concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (1798) and Robert Owen's *Report to the County of Lanark* (1821) to Thomas Hodgskin's *Labour Defended against the Claims of Capital* and the *Unproductiveness of Capital* (1830) and *Practical Reasoning* (1830).

## Intellect over understanding

## Norman Gash

WENDY HINDE  
Richard Cobden: A Victorian outsider  
300pp. Yale University Press. £14.95.  
0 300 03880 1  
NICHOLAS C. EDSALL  
Richard Cobden: Independent Radical  
365pp. Harvard University Press. £26.75.  
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One can learn much about a society from its heroes. To the Victorian middle classes at the end of the nineteenth century the story of Cobden, Bright and the Anti-Corn Law League was one of economic, political and social rectitude: a parable of two plain business men who organized a great movement of public opinion which by peaceful pressure and sober reasoning forced an aristocratic parliament to abandon an obnoxious piece of class legislation. Admittedly, after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, neither man achieved anything of comparable importance. Bright ended his career in administrative mediocrity under Gladstone. Cobden, declining office and a baronetcy, did not live to see the Second Reform Act and the new-style Liberal administration which followed. For both, the twenty years after the Corn Law victory were in the nature of an anticlimax. They took up one worthy cause after another — retrenchment, pacifism, education, extension of the franchise, the secret ballot, church rate abolition — but none of these yielded the same success or brought the same prestige. Death, however, conferred historical canonization. "They were", pronounced the *Concise Dictionary of National Biography* at the start of this century, "the two leading representatives of the emergence of the manufacturing class as a force in English politics after the Reform Act of 1832." Two monumental biographies by Liberal historians, that of Cobden by Morley in 1879, that of Bright by Trevelyan in 1913, confirmed their place in the Victorian pantheon.

It was only after the Second World War that the plaster was chipped away from these bland effigies to reveal the less decorous but more human figures underneath. The seminal book was Norman McCord's *The Anti-Corn Law League*, published in 1958. From this, and such other objective studies as W. D. Grampp's *Manchester School of Economics* (1960), a new picture emerged. So far from having an unbroken and triumphant career, the League suffered sharp fluctuations of fortune, was sorely divided over tactics, came perilously close to sedition and made several abrupt changes of strategy. Without a clear economic philosophy, it took from the classic free-trade doctrine only as much as suited its purpose. In practice it was a blend of dogmatic principles, self-interest, religious hostility and class jealousy. Indeed, in many respects its activities could be thought of as a continuation of the reform struggle of 1831-2 under another name. To that struggle it brought high-powered organization, methods that were sometimes dubious, and propaganda that was often inflammatory. In the end, however, the League was caught unprepared by the repeal of the Corn Laws a year before the general election of 1847 and was little more than a bystander in the parliamentary crisis of 1845-6. At most it was only one, though an important one, in the coincidence of forces that enabled Peel to put an end to the Corn Laws.

In the light of all this there has long been a case for re-examining in detail the careers of the two men whose names are associated (in Bright's case, a little spuriously) with the leadership of the League. A number of short studies did appear, but nothing on the magisterial scale of Morley and Trevelyan. Now, almost simultaneously, come two major biographies of Cobden, the more important of the pair one by a British author who has already made her name with lives of Canning and Gladstone, the other by an American historian who has been known on this side of the Atlantic for the valuable monograph *The Anti-Poor Law Movement of 1834-44*. Unkind coincidences like this can never be relished by the writers concerned. The two books are about the same length, they use basically the same materials, and they are both written in an attractive, readable style.

duced with a good legible type. Wendy Hinde's biography is embellished by no less than fourteen illustrations while Nicholas C. Edsall's is austere content with one. There are no fundamental disagreements of interpretation and there is inevitably a great similarity in contents. Fortunately, however, the two authors are sufficiently distinctive in style and approach to make their books complementary rather than competitive.

As a biography Miss Hinde's book is the more polished and elegant. This is not to detract from her scholarship, which is both comprehensive and exact. Her mind is fresh and critical; her judgment good; her style brisk, economical and readable. But, as a good biographer should, she concentrates on the man himself; he never becomes a cardboard figure against a background of general history. Indeed, except on the matter of the Corn Laws, she avoids lengthy explanations of broad historical issues and to that extent presumes a degree of historical knowledge in the reader. She brings to the study of Cobden a cool, discerning eye, not unsympathetic but aware of his weaknesses as well as his strengths. There is no attempt at a dramatic reappraisal of her subject. The picture that emerges is one that a reflective reader might have been able to construct from the mass of original material which Morley, like most Victorian biographers, incorporated in his text. What was implicit in Morley, however, is here made explicit and convincing. Her book is beyond question the most satisfying portrait of Cobden we have yet been given.

Professor Edsall is less interested in Cobden as a person than as an exponent of ideas which have an application not only to his own time but to later generations. This approach is understandable, for Cobden's politics, as he rightly says, were the politics of ideas. He goes even further and argues that Cobden "was among the first practical politicians to attempt to come to grips with the wider implications of the economic revolution of his time for government and society, for international relations and war". This, for Edsall, constitutes the fascination of Cobden's career, and he ends his book as he begins it, on the topical note, "Our own generation might do well to look to that example." Not surprisingly his life of Cobden is concerned more with ideas and causes than character and personality. He handles them well; his analyses of public issues are both detailed and subtle, and his conclusions are persuasive. If to understand Cobden the reader should go first to Hinde, to understand the things that Cobden was interested in he should go first to Edsall.

Bagshot said of Cobden that he was an outsider, a term which Hinde uses in her title and makes one of the recurrent themes of her book. It was a just comment but needs elaboration. What was it that made Cobden an outsider in Victorian society? As far as parliamentary politics were concerned, the answer is not too difficult. Although Edsall places him among the "practical politicians", the adjective is justified only in the narrow sense that he was for many years a member of the House of Commons. Essentially he was not so much a politician as a philosopher and publicist. "I preferred", he once wrote, "pioneering for my convictions to promotion at the expense of them." That he put the choice in such stark terms is revealing. The truth is that he did not like political life and made little effort to understand it. After listening once to his views on abstaining from office, Palmerston good-naturedly asked him why he sat in the House of Commons at all. To this Cobden could find no satisfactory answer. For all but his first few years the Commons heard him with courtesy and respect, as they always do a man of intelligence, clarity and unselfish motives. Yet though they respected him, they were rarely convinced.

Cobden, then, was a man of ideas rather than a man of affairs. He had the logic that comes from reflection, not the wisdom that comes from experience. He was also self-taught, with the dogmatism and assurance which frequently result from that species of education. His range of ideas was limited and changed little. The first two pamphlets he wrote, *England, Ireland and America* and *Russia*, when he was just over thirty, explain the focus in large of his thought for the rest of his life.

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METHUEN

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of his career. He made up for the narrowness of his ideas by the skill and pertinacity with which he expounded them. The Anti-Corn Law League did not drag him into the public arena. It was because he was irresistibly drawn to public controversy that he threw himself into a movement which promised greater opportunities than the causes which he had so far taken up. He was a born propagandist with an itch for scribbling and an almost messianic belief in his vision of the future. "I see in the Free Trade principle," he once told an audience in Manchester, "that which shall act on the moral world as the principle of gravitation in the universe." The unkind jibe at Cobden and Bright as "inspired bagmen dreaming of a cotton millennium" was not altogether without justification.

In a speech in parliament after Cobden's death Disraeli described him as "without doubt the greatest political character that the pure middle class of this country has yet produced". It would be a fallacy, however, to assume that Cobden actually represented the middle classes (pure or otherwise) of his day. Even at the height of the League's popularity the wealthier bourgeoisie of Manchester were at best lukewarm. Cobden compared them, to their disadvantage, with the small manufacturers of Birmingham. In reality he never established a warm or lasting relationship with any of the northern constituencies which returned him to parliament: he was too inveterate an individualist for that. "To lose my individuality would to me be a moral death," he once wrote. For such a man there could be no satisfactory constituency; he could only represent himself. The traditional identification of Cobden with Manchester is curiously insubstantial. One of his first acts after the repeal of the Corn Laws was to sell his house in Manchester and move to London. From 1853 his main home was the house he built on old family property he had re-purchased at Dunford in Sussex. He spent more of his adult life in Sussex than in Lancashire.

Yet he could no more take root in the rural

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society of Sussex than in the clubland of London. His bitter, lifelong dislike of the landed aristocracy made that impossible. He soon began even to despise the middle classes for their snobbery and conservatism; and by the end of his life was forced despite his earlier opinions to wonder whether the organized working-class movement might not be a possible depository for his hopes. 'Though Edsall makes much of these latter-day democratic sentiments, one may doubt that Cobden could ever have become a spokesman for labour. He was not a class representative but a camouflaged version of a type familiar in European life - the rootless intellectual who seems to nourish a permanent resentment against his own country and projects his ideas and aspirations into his idealized conception of another contemporary State. In Cobden's case it was

## The quest for kinship

Anne Summers

E. V. QUINN and J. M. PREST (Editors)

Dear Miss Nightingale: A selection of Benjamin Jowett's letters 1861-1893. 359pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35. 0 198229534

For more than thirty years Benjamin Jowett and Florence Nightingale kept up a correspondence. They told one another what they were reading, what they were writing, whom they had met and were plotting to influence; commiserated with each other over setbacks, disappointments, bereavements; struggled to define what more each of them wanted out of human nature, out of public institutions, out of religious life. Like many such conversations, it was intensely private. Jowett wrote that they must remain "like pickpockets in a crowd" if they were to collaborate for good ends; and it seems likely to have been with Nightingale's approval that he instructed his executors to have most of her letters to him destroyed after his death.

It is unfortunate that the dialogue between the Master of Balliol and the Lady of the Lamp, which was so important to them both, has survived only in this one-sided form. E. V. Quinn and J. M. Prest have combed the Nightingale papers for notes and drafts of letters, and have succeeded, in an admirable introduction, in placing the relationship in the context both of Jowett's and Nightingale's public careers and of the politics of the period. But there are, of course, gaps in the narrative; and what remains of the Nightingale contribution is enough to indicate the reader's loss. Despite Jowett's justified strictures on her lack of discipline in composition, Nightingale wrote some of the most vivid prose of the nineteenth century. *Dear Miss Nightingale* is full of gems, for, despite Jowett's pious resolutions to kick the habit, both he and Nightingale loved to be rude about third parties. Jowett's "I cannot say that I like being ruled by a man who has such unsound views about Homer" was much the mildest of the judgments he passed on Gladstone, while Nightingale's denunciation of "the unutterable narrow-mindedness of this cry for Retrenchment - Retrenchment pure & simple" has a wonderfully contemporary ring.

There was much to unite these two friends. They were of an age - Jowett was born in 1817, Nightingale in 1820 - and fired with similar ambitions. Each wished to reform major institutions of the British Establishment. Jowett strove to change Balliol College, the University of Oxford and (less and less hopefully) the Church of England and the national education system. Nightingale's modest targets included the War Office, the army medical system and the administration of India, as well as the nursing of voluntary and Poor Law hospitals and the sanitary education of the population at large. Each saw the teaching and moulding of disciples as their principal strategy. "I should like to govern the world (would not you?) through my pupils," wrote Jowett; and the Balliol vacation reading party did indeed spring from the same inspiration as the rather more Spartan training offered at St Thomas's Hospital.

Although Jowett was an ordained clergyman of the Church of England, he often brought

the United States, where, he wrote once, "I fondly hope will be realised some of those dreams of human exaltation, if not of perfection, with which I love to console myself."

When Cobden first went to the States in 1835 he proclaimed that the young Republic exceeded his expectations and he would advise anyone to settle there. Compare this with the reaction of Charles Dickens seven years later. Both men called themselves radicals; both had republican sympathies. Yet Dickens confessed himself deeply disappointed. "This is not the republic I came to see; this is not the republic of my imagination. . . . The man who comes to this country a Radical and goes home again with his opinions unchanged, must be a Radical on reason, sympathy and reflection, and one who has so well considered the subject that he has no chance of wavering." The difference

Nightingale Holy Communion when they met), neither was a conventional Christian. Each sought a spiritually independent of creeds, capable of transforming religious, political, material and personal life; each was imbued with a sense of mission. Jowett's frequent and unselfconscious references to the ministry of Christ find many echoes among Nightingale's private notes and meditations. "We must both go on for five or ten or twenty years," he wrote in 1873.

whatever is the appointed time, & carry out our work to the utmost. No doubt more might have been done by both of us, not by harder work, but by better considered work. (Chris only worked for 3 years, perhaps only for 15 months.)

Perhaps the most important bond between them was the fact that they had taken up work which proved incompatible with the married state, and which entailed distancing themselves from their families. In 1853 Nightingale had taken the step, unprecedented for a woman of her class, of leaving a wealthy parental home for good, neither to marry nor to enter a religious sisterhood, but to free herself for work in hospital management and public health. Loyal as the members of her immediate family were, it was not to be expected that they should share her intellectual and spiritual concerns, or sympathize with her desire to live alone. Jowett had been living apart from his peripatetic, shabby-genteel family since the age of twelve. At nineteen, he was able to exchange lodgings in the City Road in London for rooms in Balliol, which for the rest of his life was to be his home.

The editors remark that "friendship with Miss Nightingale offered the excitement of gallantry without the unenvying prospect of matrimony", but it may rather have been kinship, almost in the literal sense, for which both were searching. "Don't you think that you might have been my half-sister in some former stage of existence?" was one of Jowett's wistful and revealing asides. Although he dissuaded Nightingale from publishing the passionate polemic against the family now known as the essay "Cassandra", he endorsed many of her sentiments on the topic of blood relations. He was a great believer in "the unhappiness of families, which is generally, however, sealed and shrouded from the world", and sympathized with Nightingale in the

difficulty in reconciling public and private life. The family like to share in the fame & success & are really pleased at it. But they do not want to take part in the sacrifices necessary; and do not understand them. They have no idea of the effort required, and are shocked at any departure from the ways of the world.

According to the editors, "Jowett's letters leave little room to doubt that throughout their relationship Florence Nightingale remained an invalid and a recluse. Not surprisingly, therefore, her influence tailed away after the mid-1860s." Here they are rather at the mercy of Nightingale's. His accounts of his comfortable, convivial existence in college, with vacations spent between reading parties, great houses and Continental jaunts, contrast painfully with Nightingale's sickness and solitude; certainly she had paid a higher price than he had for leaving the nest. But she never lacked for visitors. The range of her correspondence and connections was extraordinary, and survived the

death of her most important patron, Sidney Herbert, in 1861. It would be impossible to guess from these pages, for example, that between 1880 and 1883 she was engaged in highly successful machinations to reform the Army Nursing Service, drawing into her web a female relative of General Gordon, her brother-in-law Sir Harry Verney, Lt-Col Sir Evelyn Wood, Dr Henry Acland and the President of the British branch of the International Red Cross.

A one-sided source should not be equated with a one-sided relationship. They were sparing partners, and well matched. They spoke to each other, not intimately, but with a good deal of freedom. Very few people inside the Nightingale circle ever dared to rebuke her for her pessimism, her paranoia and her violent personal antipathies as Jowett did. He in his turn looked to her to "help me to lead a higher life", and she discharged her office relentlessly. He had had many critics, but none who both valued and censured him so strongly. In the end, he did not live the life or write the books she urged on him, any more than she followed his prescriptions. But the ties remained strong; and it was to her that he wrote, in his old age and infirmity: "I want to hold fast to you, dear friend, as I go down the hill."

Waiting

The best place, when he is fractious, is the British Museum, Egyptian Room.

There she sits on a bench waiting for him, waiting for the time to pass.

She has waited for him in surgeries, in special schools, in workshops;

waited for signs of improvement: for the tide to turn.

Now he is peering at the embalmed animals close-banded in their leak-marked linen.

He knocks on the glass with his knuckle at the skinny cat sitting up tall,

the baby bull, the ducks and, next to the orocodile, his own face

matching grin for grin. He raps harder and she takes his arm.

Leave them alone. They won't wake up. Hand in hand they walk away down the stairs.

put past the pillars. She winds his scarf tightly round him against the cold.

CONNIE BENSLEY

John Burnett

INA TAYLOR  
Victorian Sisters  
218pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95. 029779065 X

ZUZANNA SHONFIELD  
The Precariously Privileged: A professional family in Victorian London  
266pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50. 0192122657

LEONORE DAVIDOFF and CATHERINE HALL  
Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850  
576pp. Hutchinson. £25 (paperback, £10.95). 001647002

## A new class of woman

John Burnett

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In 1833 the Rev George Macdonald married Hannah Jones in Manchester: he was an obscure Methodist minister who never earned more than £200 a year, she was the daughter of a wholesale grocer of rather more substance and social pretension. Of eleven confinements in the following seventeen years, seven children survived to adulthood, three sons and four daughters. Alice, the eldest, married an art teacher, John Lockwood Kipling, departed with him to India and gave birth to a son, Rudyard; Georgiana ("Georgie") also married a painter, Edward (later Sir Edward Burne-Jones); Agnes married the equally famous artist Sir Edward Poynter; while Louise, the youngest, married a Midlands industrialist, Alfred Baldwin, and gave birth to a future Prime Minister, Stanley.

The Macdonald sisters pose some interesting questions. How did they move from a humble, restricted family background, where they received little or no formal education, into the highest circles of Victorian art and letters? Was their sternly religious upbringing, which glorified work and dedication to service, a help or a hindrance? Did these talented women develop into independent achievement or remain as powerful shadows behind the male throes?

Ina Taylor's fascinating *Victorian Sisters* gives some of the answers, though not all. The home was clearly the cradle of all their futures. Though strict and materially limited, it encouraged serious literature, music, and practical involvement in drawing, singing and writing - all the arts, in fact, except the theatre, forbidden fruit to good Methodists. The father was a somewhat distant figure who "came and went" about his peripatetic ministry and was required to change his district every three years. "like a wandering gypsy" as one daughter put it. The mother was the dominating figure, teaching the girls herself (the boys were sent to school), holding together a close family in its journeyings to Sheffield, Leeds, Birmingham and, eventually, London. The girls grew up to be attractive, "witty" (the Victorian politeness for intelligent) and unusually cultivated for their class. Other influences came from contacts with talented young men, friends of their brother at King Edward's School, Birmingham, and later at Oxford, including Edward Jones (not yet Burne-Jones) and William Morris.

This was their introduction to the Pre-Raphaelite set, visits to Oxford, to Rossetti's studios ("I felt in the presence of a new religion") and the world of romantic medievalism. The sisters appeared in Jones's paintings and Morris's poems. At fifteen Georgie was proposed to by Jones and was allowed to make her own decision to accept him; they were married four years later on the anniversary of the death of Dante's Beatrice. Agnes married the rising, ruthlessly ambitious Edward Poynter, and moved into royal and aristocratic circles with the future President of the Royal Academy. The sister who could most fairly claim to have advanced the careers of successful men was Alice, who propelled her husband from a lowly "art workman" at South Kensington to Principal of the Lahore Art School and viceregal social circles, and later acted as first reader, critic, censor and editor of Rudyard's early writing.

The Macdonald sisters were both of their age and, in some respects, ahead of it. They had no higher education, which was just beginning to become available to some women; later, they were denied the possibility of independent careers by their husbands' narrow view of what was an occupation for women. "Women have

suddenly woken up to the fact that they can do something, and they can't", complained Burne-Jones, and with that discouragement Georgie dutifully gave up her own artistic ambitions, condoned Edward's affair with Maria Zambaco, and restricted her own relationships with Morris and Ruskin to the purely platonic. How far these transitional, partly emancipated "Victorian Sisters" regarded their lives as fulfilled or thwarted is not clear from Taylor's otherwise revealing biography.

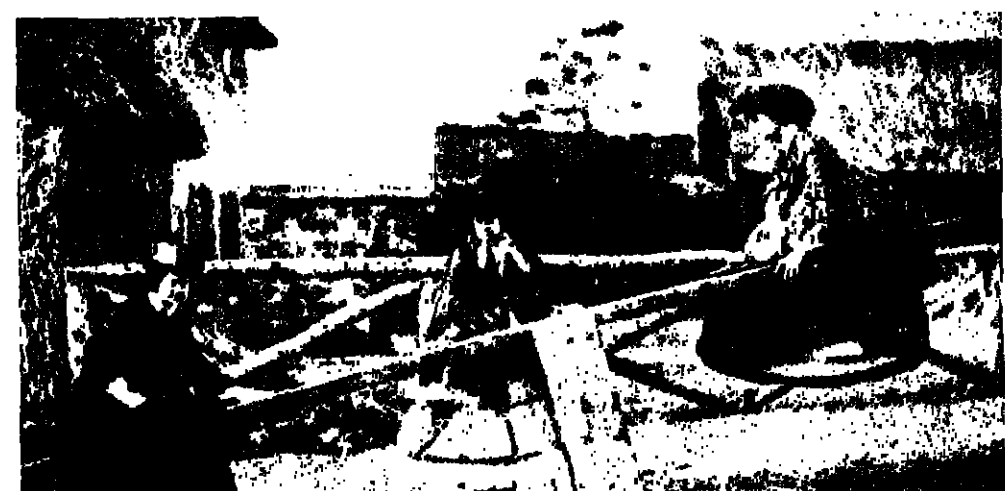
If the Macdonald sisters' glittering marriages were outstanding examples of successful social mobility, Jeannette Marshall's long search for a husband and ultimate alliance with an unglamorous forty-four-year-old Medical Officer of Health presents a puzzling contrast. Zuzanna Shonfield's *The Precariously Privileged*, which reconstructs Jeannette's life from the twenty-two volumes of diaries which she kept between the ages of fourteen and thirty-six, and admirably sets her thoughts and doings in the context of upper-middle-class Victorian society, is oddly titled - privileged she certainly was, and "precarious" scarcely applies to a father whose income climbed to between four and five thousand a year (perhaps £100,000 in contemporary value) and who set aside up to two-thirds of it in safe investments. "Very comfortable, too", she remarked to her diary.

Her father, John Marshall, was the son of an Ely solicitor who had moved to London after qualifying as a surgeon. He built up a lucrative practice from the family home in Savile Row and also attained academic distinction, being appointed to the Chair of Clinical Surgery at University College Hospital. The family was able to move in fashionable society - the top medical fraternity, but also artists (they were close friends of Ford Madox Brown and acquainted with the Burne-Joneses) and fashionable aesthetes: there were plenty of dinner-parties, musical soirées, theatres, concerts and holidays in Switzerland. With only one younger sister and an even younger brother, the attractive and intelligent Jeannette should have been well placed to make an excellent match.

For twenty seasons she assiduously flirted whenever occasion offered, "ogled" (her word), thumped her Broadway, and devoted three hours each day to trimming and refurbishing her extensive wardrobe in the current fashions. One difficulty was that given the requirements of formal introduction and strict chaperoning (to which she objected) the opportunities were restricted, and unlike the Macdonalds she had no brother of an age to introduce eligible young men. Another was that until her early thirties, when a life "on the shelf" became an alarming possibility, she set her sights very high, was by her own confession "haughty" and probably too sharp-tongued for most suitors. But the outstanding problem was simply that of "the surplus woman" - the shortage of eligible males for middle-class Victorian women. Due to the unfavourable sex ratio, 30 per cent of all women aged between twenty and forty were single in 1851, and the proportion tended to be even higher in the middle class, where many young bachelors were either on service overseas or delayed marriage until they had achieved success in business or the professions. Plenty of men were only too willing to amuse themselves with Jeannette, but backed off when required to declare their intentions: most of her serious suitors were much older men, and some, like the one she married, were widowers.

All this makes a good story, but *The Precariously Privileged* is more than this - a vignette of many aspects of Victorian social life revealed by the skilful editing of what must often have been boring, sometimes silly, comments. But the diarist also included details of everyday life which are of real interest to the social historian - about the gauze respirators worn against the London fog, the "green water" smells in the homes of relatives, the "right" part of Hyde Park for promenading, the rents of houses and the costs of domestic service. We are not required to empathize with this vain egocentric to enjoy the glimpses of society just below "the best circles".

In the lives both of the Macdonald sisters and of Jeannette Marshall there is evident the beginnings of some protest against the attitudes and values of Victorian society which



Lady Alice Egerton, Lady Elizabeth de Ros and Lady Katherine Egerton on a makeshift see-saw; a photograph reproduced from Christopher Simon Sykes's *Country House Camera* (234pp. Pavilion. Paperback £9.95. 1 85145 171 4).

condemned women to a subordinate, marginalized existence in the shadows of a male world. What the historian wants to know is how this had come about - what were the determinants of this mid-century, middle-class culture which, by a process of osmosis, came to characterize the distribution of power and patterns of sexual relationships in Britain until recent times?

In their deeply interesting, superbly researched book, *Family Fortunes*, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall trace the development of the middle-class family in its formative period between 1780 and 1850. Although they build the account around the history of two families, one a publishing house in East Anglia, the other a Birmingham manufacturer, wider reference is constantly made to other families in the regions, using excellent source material from diaries, letters, wills and other contemporary records. What emerges from a mass of detail are the underlying determinants of the familial and economic patterns of the mid-nineteenth century - the influence of religion, and especially of the Evangelical

Revival, the importance attached to education, the centrality of the home as "the Nursery of Virtue", and the moral imperatives of the drive for economic progress which viewed the nation as a macrocosm of organically linked prospering and God-fearing families. These are not new discoveries, but they are documented, analysed and integrated in this monumental book as never before.

What is original, and important, is the proper place which the authors give to the role of women in the formation of the middle-class economy. One does not have to be a feminist historian to know that women have been largely left out of the history books. In *Family Fortunes* the balance is redressed. Women are here not only as wives and mothers, but as "The Hidden Investment", working in family businesses, using their familial and social resources to raise capital and extend the enterprise. What went wrong to keep the daughters of these intelligent, energetic women from taking active roles in the world - producing, in fact, the Jeannette Marshalls? This important book should have a sequel.

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## Much obliged

William Twining

TONY HONORÉ  
*Making Law Bind: Essays legal and philosophical*  
274pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30.  
0198254679

Tony Honoré, the Regius Professor of Civil Law at Oxford, has made very substantial contributions to Roman Law, Roman-Dutch Law and several other fields. His and H. L. A. Hart's *Essays in the Law* is rightly acknowledged to be a classic of analytical jurisprudence. This selection from his scattered theoretical writings, most of them published between 1961 and 1983, suggests that Honoré deserves wider recognition as a legal philosopher.

Several of the thirteen essays reprinted here – "Groups, Laws and Obedience", "Real Laws" and "Ownership", for example – are well known to specialists; others have lurked in relative obscurity in various sources. All have been revised, some extensively. They are introduced by a chapter that draws the main themes together into a relatively coherent whole.

Most of the essays are significant interventions in familiar debates. Some, such as those dealing with political obligation (Chapter Six), ownership (Chapter Eight) and social justice (Chapter Nine), can be recommended as good starting-points for the study of these topics. All are cogent, readable and succinct, uncluttered by footnotes. As an anthology or retrospective exhibition of well-crafted items, *Making Law Bind* deserves a wider audience.

Rather diffidently, the book also invites assessment as a general statement of a position. As such it is a partial success. Essays written over many years for diverse audiences are not the best vehicle for presenting an argument; yet read together these suggest a genuinely original legal philosophy. The outcome is a fresh defence of a familiar orthodoxy.

Honoré acknowledges debts to Joseph Raz, Ronald Dworkin, John Finnis, G. A. Cohen and, above all, Hart; his short list of the great and good also includes a few American political philosophers. Crisp critiques of Nozick, Rawls, Hayek and Kelsen distance him suitably from this recognizable quartet. The essays cluster around a sustained concern with the nature of legal and moral obligation as they relate to laws conceived as coercive instruments of State power. The central question is,

in Honoré's words, "how can a system of state-organized violence create obligations?" The main aim is to defend the twin ideas that there are values common to all legal systems as such, including the value of the rule of law, and that *prima facie*, citizens are bound to obey State law and States are bound to obey international law. The basic ingredients of this position are a conception of State law as an institutionalized coercive system of rules and principles which make up the official normative system of a group, the basic values that underlie legal obligation being, in a broad sense, co-operation and accommodation; and the beliefs that liberal notions of ownership and property rights are compatible with an egalitarian view of justice, and that the appropriate method of defending such views is to construct arguments that make use of conceptual, empirical and normative elements.

This general position and approach are familiar; the distinctiveness lies in some of the particular arguments and intermediate conclusions. For example, for Honoré, "the first question of descriptive legal theory is not 'what is a rule?', but 'what is a group?'; the most important group is the human community, and if there is such a community, there must be one genuinely human right, viz. 'the right that the earth should be preserved as the home of our species and other species which are of use and interest to us'. Kelsen was correct in maintaining that the idea of a legal system presupposes a valid basic norm, but wrong in asserting that the basic norm cannot be substantive: for Honoré, the basic norm postulates that members of the group have a duty to co-operate. Honoré also differs sharply from Raz on political obligation, from Hart on the enforcement of morals, and, less surprisingly, from Nozick on distributive justice. Honoré's originality lies not so much in the individual ideas as in the way in which he combines them to develop and defend his commitment to law as a legitimate and necessary communitarian enterprise.

The *dramatis personae*, the style, the concerns and the questions locate the author clearly in post-1950 Oxford, "a brilliant era in legal philosophy". Honoré modestly presents his essays as "the reactions of a spectator who has been privileged to follow its course at first hand". It makes sense to talk of an Oxford school of legal philosophy as a historical phenomenon that has flourished for nearly forty years and is still flourishing; but this "school" defies sensible classification in terms of ideas and doctrines (except perhaps in a negative sense), partly because it has been remarkably

undocinaire. Honoré's own work illustrates the fallacy of the claim that Oxonian jurists have been mainly concerned with "linguistic analysis". Orthodox terminology posts his five most influential colleagues into different pigeon-holes: Hart and Raz are arch-positivists; Dworkin is positivism's leading critic; Finnis is a Natural Lawyer; Cohen, a recent recruit, is a Marxist political theorist. None of the labels fits Honoré. Yet he is unmistakably a full member of the Oxford Group.

The general position Honoré defends is a clear example of what is fashionably labelled "a liberal theory of law" by sympathizers and "liberal legalism" by critics. Yet the relationship between some of his main arguments and other important bodies of thought is less clear. For example, function, group, institution and system are key concepts in his theory, as they are in sociology and anthropology. In the illuminating essay "What is a group?", originally published in 1975, he acknowledges that anthropologists, "psychologists and sociologists study human groups". Yet he cites only a few of their works, all of them from before 1960, and makes almost no reference to the long tradition of writing within the sociology of law that treats "group" and "institution" and "function" as central concepts in understanding law. This suggests that his instincts are at odds with his intellectual milieu: he neither invokes nor addresses his strongest allies.

## No accounting for judges

A. W. B. Simpson

P. S. ATIYAH  
*Pragmatism and Theory in English Law*  
184pp. Stevens. £14.50 (paperback, £7.50).  
0420475907

In this collection of lectures, P. S. Atiyah explores a claim which has, during this century, come to form part of the received rhetoric of our judiciary: that the principal virtue of the English legal system, in vague contrast to what goes on elsewhere, lies in its pursuit of pragmatic solutions to the problems arising in litigation, and its aversion to theory. As belief in legal science, once strongly entrenched, faded, this claim came to express the typical belief of a higher judiciary recruited from the practising Bar, whose members had rarely experienced any form of systematic legal education. It has continued to be repeated, so much so as to generate suspicion of a certain nervousness in judges, who find it comforting to pose as hard-headed men of action.

The opposition of the pragmatic to the theoretical is only one form in which the claim is made; in his opening lecture Professor Atiyah sets out and discusses other such pairs of contrasting ideas. Thus law based on experience is contrasted with law based on logic; a system concerned to offer workable remedies with one committed to the vindication of abstract rights; law based on precedent with law based on principle; and law evolved by practitioners with law emanating from academics. Thus are English law and the English legal system agreeably portrayed as being based on sturdy common sense, far removed from the dangers of high-falutin intellectualism.

Having set out and analysed the nature of this self-congratulatory, low-brow legal theory, Atiyah goes on to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the pragmatic tradition; in doing so he accepts that its claims, given some tidying up, are something more than mere rhetoric, and reflect real features of the legal system. Not all of his conclusions will command general acceptance. For example, he commends as a pragmatic strength the legal system's profound hostility to litigation, which renders the courts largely irrelevant to the bulk of the population. He might be criticized further for a tendency to discuss the work of the regular higher courts in isolation from other social institutions which have taken over many of their functions. But within the limits referred Atiyah's discussion is always interesting, readable and to the point.

The final lecture moves on to a more radical theme, for here Atiyah argues that the pragmatic claim to operate the judicial system in the light of experience alone, in isolation from

A second example is rather different. In one of the most suggestive essays, "The Human Community and Majority Rule", Honoré points out that many prominent writers on legal and political philosophy almost totally ignore the international community and the implications of transnational interdependence. In arguing for a principle of limited world majority rule "concerned primarily with the preservation of the planet as a home for mankind", he makes some points that are deeply subversive of several writers, especially Rawls and Dworkin. Yet the implications of his argument are not followed through nor does he enlist some obvious supporters in the cause of taking the idea of a world community seriously. What might have been a trumpet-blast, only sounds a polite, understated murmur of dissent.

*Making Law Bind* is an example of Oxonian legal theory at its best. It brings together a number of substantial and elegant contributions to conversations about issues that are central to the agenda of an important group of legal philosophers. Honoré has never been the mere spectator he has claimed to be; but, despite skilful editing, this collection falls short of a fully articulated statement of a distinctive theory of law. One hopes that this is not a swan-song, for the central thesis and its implications deserve restatement and development.

theory, is no more than a myth. This is surely true: experience alone, in the absence of values, purposes and policies, provides no direction to action whatever. He suggests that the English practitioners' dislike of explicit theory, which is what is in reality involved, reflects an underlying reluctance to be accountable. By refusing to bring out into the open the implicit purposes which lie beneath legal decisions, an elitist judiciary preserves its oracular status.

Underlying the general theme of these lectures is a secondary one which, understandably enough, Atiyah handles with some delicacy. Sturdy common sense is supposedly a quality associated with the barristers who are effectively the only individuals who can ever hope to become full-time judges. Given the small size of the practising Bar, and the large number of judicial appointments, judgeships are best seen as providing a form of partial early retirement and favourable pension arrangements for ageing barristers. The barrel has indeed to be scraped to find enough candidates for judicial office to keep the court system going. The theoreticians *par excellence* are the legal academics, and the rhetoric of pragmatism can be seen as a mechanism for legitimizing their exclusion from the higher courts, by portraying them as impossible head-in-the-clouds candidates for judicial office. Understandably, some academics do not relish this state of affairs, and much of what is said in these lectures amounts to a critical discussion of the relationship between the Bar and law faculties. Some optimists believe this is improving, but until the structural arrangements alter it is difficult to agree. Professor Atiyah's lectures have the considerable merit of ventilating the matter, albeit most moderately, and of drawing attention to some of the more absurd anti-intellectualism of the judicial profession.

Simon James and Chantal Stebbings's *A Dictionary of Legal Quotations* (209pp. Croom Helm. £12.95, 0 7099 1403 2) has as a sample quotation on the dust-jacket praise from Lord Diplock for the beauty of common law: "It is a maze and not a motorway". More jaundiced views ("I am ashamed the law is such an ass", George Chapman; "Law is but an heathen word for power", Daniel Defoe), generally from those without the law, are expressed elsewhere in sections which range from the general – "Government", "Quill" – to the narrowly defined – "Polygamy", "Torts", the pithiest remarks coming in the former category and being drawn from sources such as Horace, the Bible and Shakespeare, rather than from legal experts or judges with an eye on the immortality of precedent. The section on lawyers' opinions is entirely of apparently accurate statements.

## Discovering deep time

Mark Ridley

STEPHEN JAY GOULD  
*Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and metaphor in the discovery of geological time*  
22pp. Harvard University Press. £15.50.  
0674891988

"Geology's greatest contribution to human thought", according to Stephen Jay Gould, is the discovery of the antiquity of the earth. In the early eighteenth century, it had generally been believed to be only a few thousand years old. One century later, a much greater age had been established, and although the geologists did not deal in exact figures, they would probably not have quarrelled with modern estimates, made by the radioisotope technique, of about 4,500 million years.

Gould's latest book is a history of this discovery, written as an analysis of three of the greatest of geological books: Thomas Burnet's *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1680-9), James Hutton's *Theory of the Earth* (1795) and Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-3). He discusses these books in terms of a deep conceptual dichotomy: between "time's arrow" and "time's cycle".

The dichotomy, which, in Gould's words, "lies deep in Western thinking", is rather different from what you might expect. It refers to two opposite philosophies of history. In the case of "time's arrow", unique events follow one another in a directional course, and what happens at a particular time depends only on contingent local influences and on what happened before; no grand law controls the course of events. In the metaphor of "time's cycle", however, history is thought to be regulated by large-scale laws. "Cyclic" history does not have to be cyclic in the oscillatory sense, it could be completely static, but so long as the course of history is controlled by a historical law, Gould calls it cyclic. "Time's cycle may refer to true and unchanging permanence or immanent structure or to recurring cycles of separable events precisely repeated." He also, rather unorthodoxly, discusses the typological correspondences of Old and New Testament events in medieval art as examples of historical cycles.

His distinction is between lawful and contingent processes, not between directional and cyclic ones. I am unsure how he would deal with a theory like Augustine's, in whose vision history proceeds forwards through a series of unique events, but does so as a providential unfolding towards a significant end, rather than as a series of contingencies. Augustinian history has both the immanence of the "cyclic" pattern and the directionality of the "arrow". These two metaphors, Gould believes, provide the key to the mysteries of the three great books. They also help to reveal how the true age of the earth ("deep time") was actually discovered. "I recognized", he says, "that Hutton's and Lyell's preference for deep time arose, first and foremost, from their commitment to the unfamiliar view of time's cycle."

Why should this be? At the time of Hutton, one reason for supposing that the earth must be young was that its erosion, by rivers and rain, is relatively rapid. If it had been going on for long there would be no land left, because all the earth would have been washed into the sea. Yet we can see land, therefore the earth is quite young. In Gould's words, geologists before Hutton "viewed the history of our planet as a short tale of uninterrupted erosion". Now, Hutton (for deistic reasons) could not accept that the earth was young. His problem, therefore, was to find a mechanism to counteract erosion. This was the process of "uplifting": if the earth could be uplifted again after erosion, it need not be young, it could go through indefinite cycles. And what evidence could Hutton find for uplifting? For that we must look at his interpretation of "unconformities". An unconformity (in Gould's definition) "is a fossil surface of erosion, a gap in time separating two episodes in the formation of rocks". Distinct strata of rocks, separated by unconformities, would be difficult to understand if the earth had been continually eroded from its beginning; but they make sense if cycles of erosion (leading to the formation of sedimentary rocks) are interrupted by cycles of uplift. After each phase of uplifting, a new layer of rocks could be laid down, the process

could continue for ever, and the resulting layers would reveal, in Hutton's words, "no vestige of a beginning, – no prospect of an end". The earth could be old indeed.

Gould provides a characteristically readable account of the arguments of Burnet, Hutton and Lyell. His two metaphors organize the material and clarify the discussion. The book was evidently written for (and the lectures on which it is based given to) non-specialists as well as historians of geology, and it could be read with interest by almost anybody. I do, however, see some danger in Gould's historical method. He does not aim to understand the three books in terms of their authors' other works or their historical context; indeed he has isolated them from that context, and sought to understand them instead only in terms of his own preconceived dichotomy. His aim is to grasp the internal logic of each book. He is not really concerned with what questions the authors themselves were asking or with how they thought. A work of history, this book suffers from anachronism.

Gould would disagree. His main defence for writing in terms of arrows and cycles is that Burnet, Hutton and Lyell themselves thought in those terms; it was, he insists, "their dichotomy", and "I believe that the major actors who struggled with time and the meaning of history from the late seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth century kept such a dichotomy at the forefront of their thought". Yet he provides no evidence for this. He fits their arguments into the dichotomy, to be sure; but he does not show that it was "at the forefront of their thought". They might, for instance, merely have imagined themselves as thinking about history, and drawing from time to time on whatever concepts seemed appropriate, regardless of which great dichotomy the concepts might later be found to fit.

Gould has several further aims besides writing the history of geological time. Many will already be familiar to his readers; Gould is becoming a repetitive writer. He is becoming rather like Herbert Spencer, who was also enormously productive, but came to concentrate on a few reiterated themes. In the "synthetic philosophy", Spencer liked to unify (or find analogies among) widely different subjects, just as Gould likes to find similarities between art and morphology or between evolutionary and political change. Like Spencer in his time, he enjoys great public fame and influence. But the grand ideas he popularizes do not always merit the overstatement he lavishes on them. In this book, Gould is again concerned to "debunk" the "myth" of empiricism. Scientists, we are told, do not discover their theories by collecting facts; they do so by creative thought. But whoever disagrees with that now? It has become a cliché.

Gould likes to cast himself in the heroic role – liberating his readers from their culturally induced orthodoxies and prejudices – and he repeatedly contrasts his own enlightened views with the "textbook cardboard" of empiricism. Reading him, one thinks less of cardboard than of straw men. Who now learns their historical opinions from Sir Archibald Geikie (almost forgotten, except by professional historians), journalists (unimportant), or science textbooks (irrelevant)? Scientists certainly do not. Textbooks show how facts fit theories, but that is because the function of textbooks is to teach science, not history. Hutton may have believed that the earth had to be old because of some deistic notion that its perfection required its permanence; but that is his problem: modern geology students accept his ideas because of the evidence for unconformity – and they are quite right to do so.

The original 1977 version of *Scientific and Technical Information Sources* has been revised in a revised and greatly expanded edition (824pp. MIT Press. £49.50 0 262 0312 0) and lists 5,300 sources, most of them published between 1980 and February 1986. Subjects covered range from bioengineering to military technology, as well as the more traditional fields, with extensive entries under computer technology and communications. Since different types of sources (encyclopaedias, databases, bibliographies, government documents) are used for different purposes, sources are here divided up, first by type and then by subject category.

# TLS

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Continued from page 986

necessarily operate partially in secret. We must protect them in that. What she said was right but it is necessary to be clear about its implications. The need for an open society is no less important than the need for an M15 and an M16 – indeed, to be democratically acceptable, the secret services must reflect the values of an open society. But do they? Can a society be "open", if it possesses a security service, operating in secrecy against those groups that are deemed hostile to its democratic order? And who decides who democracy's enemies are?

No one can doubt that since there are both foreign states and domestic groups which wish to subvert the democratic life of this country we need an M15, an M16 and a Special Branch to counter them. Effective domestic security, however, can only be done in secret. This being so, the critical issue becomes the political one: who decides which groups merit secret attention and, equally important, who decides precisely what sort of attention they should receive? Hollis, whom I suppose Wright despised as a cautious bureaucrat, shuffling around Whitehall in his stiletto shoes, stood for one kind of M15, Wright, and perhaps some others [see *Inside Story*, 2nd edn, 1978, pp 16-19], for another, altogether more aggressive and sinister kind. Hollis believed in an M15 that was careful, low-key, very secretive and in tune with the tradition of political neutrality inherent in the British Civil Service (of which he saw M15 as an important, if hidden, part). He sought to avoid getting M15 mixed up in political debate and aimed at the creation of a passive security service whose key-notes were good intelligence and keeping people away from areas where they could cause harm. He had been horrified by the internment procedures during the war and sought to avoid a repetition of this kind of security work [see *The Secrets of the Service*]. Like all secret service chiefs, he knew that every Prime Minister, every Foreign and Home Secretary, would take a keen interest in secret work and that he was paid to

satisfy his clients while not compromising his own judgement.

Peter Wright, on the other hand, clearly wanted M15 to be an active and interventionist force, exploiting its considerable power to install bugs and to interrogate quite ruthlessly all those he suspected of subversion, even when it had apparently taken place thirty years before, under quite different historical circumstances [see Granada TV interview transcript, pp11-12; *Their Trade is Treachery*, pp 164-5]. It is no coincidence that Wright's obsession with Hollis came to a head at the time when, if Chapman Pincher is to be relied upon in *Inside Story*, "certain officers inside M15 assisted by others who had retired from the Service were actually trying to bring the Labour Government [in 1974-79] down". There was supposedly talk of some of them "going native" and using their privileged information to interfere in the democratic process.

Under such heads as Petrie, Dick White and Hollis, M15 did adhere to the values of an open society: these men could tell the difference between democratic and undemocratic behaviour, between a security service and a secret police. Wright, however, could not. That is why his opponents have accused him of wanting to establish a quasi "Gestapo" – a charge that was not without foundation [see *The Secrets of the Service*, p 298 and below].

Those who use the Wright case to assert that greater political control of M15 is needed risk producing a security service which looks far more like Wright's conception than Hollis's. The lesson to be drawn from Wright's excesses and his ultimate betrayal of M15 is that politicians need to draw back from an involvement with security policy. Political control already exists with the senior Home Office and Foreign Office officials who monitor secret service work, the Security Commission and the Prime Minister and Foreign and Home Secretaries. It is not without irony that politicians' feigned lack of interest in M15 and M16 has now rebounded to produce a call for far greater political control in order to "curb" the secret service [see Pincher's account of this in *Too Secret Too Long*].

Greater political involvement would produce more dirty tricks rather than fewer. The apparent emergence of rogue officers in the political "chaos" before 1979 (discussed by Pincher) required, were it true, firmer bureaucratic control, not greater political interference – those involved ought to have been sacked and, if necessary, prosecuted. Party political intervention would end up making M15's work impossible. What the politicians should now do is re-assert the fundamental principles of secret work and restore authority to those prepared to uphold them.

It is important to recall that, as we know from the Granada TV interview, Peter Wright's career began in the M15 of White and Hollis, who subscribed to the softly-softly approach to security matters. Wright, who read rural economy at what is now St Peter's College Oxford (*St Peter's College Record*), had a scientific background. He understood about microphones and delighted in setting bugs [Granada TV transcript, p 12, *Inside Story*, pp 32 and 152].

When, however, he was promoted [Granada TV transcript, p 3], he became involved in M15's most sensitive problem, one that was essentially non-technical: the Communist penetration of M15 and M16. His narrow scientific training made him, though, ill equipped to deal with this great mole hunt, which required a subtle interpretation of the evidence of penetration [see *The Secrets of the Service*, pp 304-318]. Wright had a boorish insensitivity towards evidence, which mirrored his treatment of those under suspicion [the Granada TV interview speaks of the "remorseless investigations" he conducted; see p 11].

He was, of course, justified in his assertion that M15 and M16 had been virtually incapable of dealing with their own penetration by Communist moles and that Hollis, M15's chief anti-Communist expert since 1940, had not unearthed the culprits. Hollis did have a case to answer [see *Their Trade is Treachery*]. His answer, however, was a good one [*The Secrets of the Service*]. He had been looking at other things – at "open" rather than "secret" Communist party members, at exiled Communists from Europe but not at their English contacts [ibid]. He had not been doing the wrong things but failed to do all the right things. The notion that some of his fellow M15 and M16 officers might be serving Stalin rather than the Crown seemed unthinkable before the defection of Burgess and Maclean. Thereafter, he and others were convinced of Philby's guilt and began to suspect a number of others. He had not tipped off Burgess; he had not tipped off Philby (indeed, I do not believe Philby was tipped off by anyone – he knew his time was up). It was, of course, true that Blunt, Burgess and Philby had been Hollis's colleagues; but that was a reflection of British society at the time and of the wartime recruitment of the "best and the brightest" for which Hollis was hardly responsible. All this, combined with the historical circumstances of the Grand Alliance with Russia (whose implications, to judge by his Granada TV interview and *Their Trade is Treachery*, Wright seems to ignore), caused M15's and M16's failure, but it does not amount to convincing evidence of treason on Hollis's part.

Wright, however, seems not to have taken positive evidence into account [Granada TV interview, *The Secrets of the Service*]: his investigation of Hollis and his deputy, Graham Mitchell, appears to have been based on negative evidence. His concept of ideal evidence is the empty box. A box is meant to be full: if it is empty it is because something incriminating has been removed from it. Wright cites empty box evidence repeatedly in his attempt to incriminate Hollis. Indeed, much of the case against Hollis was essentially empty box evidence, for it was what was missing in Hollis's life (his time in China and the "missing two years" from 1936-38) that most attracted Wright's interest [see *Their Trade is Treachery*, p 47 ff; *The Secrets of the Service*, pp 379-399, Granada Transcript, p 330 ff]. The case against Hollis rested almost wholly on defector material pointing to a "Fifth Man". [*Their Trade is Treachery*, Granada TV interview, The Granada TV transcript, pp 12-13, 152-153, 155-156, 158-159, 161-162, 164-165, 167-168, 170-171, 173-174, 176-177, 179-180, 182-183, 185-186, 188-189, 191-192, 194-195, 197-198, 200-201, 203-204, 206-207, 209-210, 212-213, 215-216, 218-219, 221-222, 224-225, 227-228, 230-231, 233-234, 236-237, 239-240, 242-243, 245-246, 248-249, 251-252, 254-255, 257-258, 260-261, 263-264, 266-267, 269-270, 272-273, 275-276, 278-279, 281-282, 284-285, 287-288, 290-291, 293-294, 296-297, 299-300, 302-303, 305-306, 308-309, 311-312, 314-315, 317-318, 320-321, 323-324, 326-327, 329-330, 332-333, 335-336, 338-339, 341-342, 344-345, 347-348, 350-351, 353-354, 356-357, 359-360, 362-363, 365-366, 368-369, 371-372, 374-375, 377-378, 380-381, 383-384, 386-387, 389-390, 392-393, 395-396, 398-399, 401-402, 404-405, 407-408, 410-411, 413-414, 416-417, 419-420, 422-423, 425-426, 428-429, 431-432, 434-435, 437-438, 440-441, 443-444, 446-447, 449-450, 452-453, 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